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**‘Christ’s Sinful Flesh’:
Edward Irving’s Christological Theology within
the Context of his Life and Times**

A Thesis Presented for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
At the University of Edinburgh
2011

Byung-Sun Lee

Declaration

I hereby certify that this thesis has been composed by me, is a record of the work carried out by me and has not previously been presented for a Higher Degree.

The research was carried out in the School of Divinity, New College, at the University of Edinburgh under the supervision of Prof. Stewart J. Brown.

30 May 2011

Byung-Sun Lee

Abstract

Edward Irving (1792-1834) exercised a profound effect on developments in nineteenth-century theology within the English-speaking world. He is especially known for his thought regarding the return of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and his pre-millennialism, including his belief in the imminent physical return of Jesus Christ. Indeed, Irving is generally remembered as a central figure in the movement of early nineteenth century pre-millennialism and as a fore-runner of the modern Pentecostal movement. Most scholarly interpretations of Irving have focused on particular aspects of his thought, such as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, his millenarianism, or his understanding of Christology. This thesis provides a new interpretation of Irving's contributions, examining the interrelationship of his theological ideas and exploring the development of them within the context of his life, including his childhood and youth within the Covenanting country of southwest Scotland, his education within the University of Edinburgh and his early teaching career, his assistantship to Thomas Chalmers in the celebrated St John's experiment in urban ministry in Glasgow, his move to London in 1822 and his meteoric rise to fame as a preacher there, his personal trauma, including his unhappy affair with the future Jane Welsh Carlyle, the deaths of his children and the tragic accident at Kirkcaldy, his connections with Romantic intellectual and religious circles in the capital, and his growing involvement with the prophetic movement. Under the influence of the Romantic Movement, Irving's religious sensibility had matured. This thesis argues that Irving's theological views, including his views on the gifts of the Spirit and his millennialism, formed a coherent system, which focused on his doctrine of Christ, and more particularly on his belief that Christ had taken on a fully human nature, including the propensity to sin. Only by sharing fully in the human condition with its 'sinful flesh' concerning all temptations, Irving believed, could Christ become the true reconciler of God and humanity and a true exemplar of godly living for

humankind. When we view Irving's theology from the perspective of his idea of Christ's genuine humanity, we can comprehend it more clearly; Irving's understanding of the spiritual gifts and his apocalyptic visions of Christ's return in glory had clear connections with his Christology. Irving's distinctive ideas on Christ's human nature and his eloquent descriptions of Christ's 'sinful flesh' resulted in severe criticisms from the later 1820s, and finally led to his being deposed from the ministry of the established Church of Scotland in 1833. His belief that we encounter God through Christ's sinful flesh reflected Irving's Romantic emphases, including the striving to transcend human limits. The Romantic sensibilities of the age and Irving's belief that the Church was locked in impotence and spiritual lethargy led him to expect a divine interruption, and to long for an ideal world through an eschatology that would bring glorification to the Church. Irving's view of the person of Christ must be understood within this broader theological framework and historical context, in which he maintained that common believers could achieve union with Christ through both their sharing of Christ's genuine humanity and the work of the Holy Spirit.

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Finally, I humbly give thanks to my wife and children. To my children, I apologize for not being around as much while I produced this work. To my wife, Soon Kee Chung, I am eternally grateful for her contributions to the completion of this research. Her tremendous support was shown not only as she took care of our family while abroad, but also as she gave huge spiritual encouragement to her overwhelmed husband.

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Abbreviations

<i>CW</i>	<i>The Collected Writings of Edward Irving in Five Volumes</i>
<i>MW</i>	<i>The Morning Watch</i>
<i>PW</i>	<i>The Prophetical Works of Edward Irving in Two Volumes</i>
CHA	Thomas Chalmers Papers, New College Library, Edinburgh
NLS	National Library of Scotland

Introduction

In 1833, the Scottish Presbyterian clergyman, Edward Irving (1792-1834), was deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland ministry by the Presbytery of Annan, because of his claim that Christ had taken on fallen human nature, including 'sinful flesh', in order to become one with us and that Christ had remained free from actual sin only. Irving's soteriological concerns, as well as his desire to assert the 'reality' of God, drove him to conclude that Christ took on sinful human flesh. To become a true saviour for humankind, Irving believed, Christ had to have a truly human nature. Although Irving also insisted that Christ had remained sinless by the special ministry of the Holy Spirit, Irving's efforts to minimize the difference between Christ and Christian believers were angrily rejected by most of his contemporaries.

Irving's life and thought continue to fascinate us. Previous scholars have tended to focus on particular aspects of his theological thought, such as his views on the nature of the Holy Spirit, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in human society, or his Christology. However, an emphasis on particular aspects can lead to distortions of his thought as a whole. A full understanding of his theological views can be come only by appreciating the interrelationship of his ideas, and by viewing his thought from several different angles. This thesis will explore the wide range of his theological framework within the context of his life and times.

Although described as a 'genial and high-minded' boy, Irving had not been remarkable in his youth, while his early career in Scotland had not been promising. But his rapid rise to 'unprecedented popularity in London', which occurred shortly after his settlement in the city in the early 1820s, transformed him into a leading early nineteenth-century evangelical figure. Although there have been several studies of Irving, which have struggled to vindicate Irving's legacy against his opponents' portrayal of him as mentally 'unhinged', Irving's name remains associated with heresy and even with mental confusion. This is partly, as I

have noted, because former studies have focused on particular aspects of his character or have stressed particular sides of his theology. Further, since he was deposed from the Established Church of Scotland in 1833, some studies have been shadowed by the preconception that he must have been ‘wrong’ in some important respects.

My aim in this thesis is not to determine whether Edward Irving was right or not, but rather to understand the intentions behind his theological writings, what motivated him to express his ideas, and how he developed his theological views, especially concerning Pneumatology and Millennialism that were connected with his understanding of the Incarnation.

Literature Review

During the later nineteenth century, several works about him, either biographical studies or studies of his circle, were published. The most extensive biography was the two-volume study published in the early 1860s by the Scottish historian and novelist, Mrs Margaret Oliphant, who collected many documents and letters concerning Irving, and whose biography conveyed ‘chiefly an interest in the man himself, and his noble courageous warfare through a career encompassed with all human agonies’.¹ This work arguably remains the most detailed and thoroughly documented biography and it provides as attractive picture of Irving. Most later writers on Irving’s life and work have drawn heavily from her work. However, Oliphant’s biography also has its critics. Some find her style of writing to be heavy and ornate, and feel that she makes too many historiographical digressions. Also, by inserting critical comments into her narrative instead of reserving them for a later critical summary, her account is sometimes ambiguous—while the work as a whole lacks analytical

¹ Margaret O. W. Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1862), ix.

rigour.² Despite these criticisms, however, Oliphant's work has remained until very recently the major biographical work on Irving.

Another biographical study, which deserves to be mentioned, is Thomas Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, in which the celebrated Scottish historian and essayist described, near the end of his life, his friendship with Irving from their teens up to Irving's death, and provided a compelling portrayal of Irving, which included the publication of several letters between the two men.³ Other nineteenth-century works might be mentioned.⁴ But I would like to concentrate on academic theses because they provided more rigorous scholarly interpretations of Irving. Before going into the academic theses, I will consider a few more biographical studies published in recent decades.

² I am indebted for this review to Paul Davies, who wrote 'An Examination of the Views of Edward Irving Concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ' as a PhD thesis in New College, Edinburgh, 1928.

³ Thomas Carlyle, 'Edward Irving' in *Reminiscences* Vol. I. (ed. J. A. Froude, Longmans, 1881).

⁴ Peter Blackburn, *Reasons for Thinking Mr. Irving Deceived; or A Discussion of some Questions Relating to the Gift of Tongues* (Cambridge: J. G. & F, 1836); William Harding, *A Word of Testimony; or, A Corrected Account of the Evidence Adduced by the Trustees of the National Scotch Church, in support of their charges against the Rev. Edward Irving, and his defence* (London: Adam Douglas, 1832); William Watson Andrews, 'Martin Luther and Edward Irving: Their Work and Testimony Compared' in *The Hartford [U.S.] Daily Times* (December 29th, 1883); William Watson Anderson, *Edward Irving*, reprinted from *The New Englander* (1863; Edinburgh, 1864); Charles J. T. Böhm, *Who are the Irvingites?: An Answer to Serious and Candid Inquirers* (London: Goodall and Son, 1851); James Fleming, *The Life and Writings of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A.* (London: Knight and Eacey, 1823); William Flewker, *A Few Words about "Irvingism"* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1848); William Graham, 'Edward Irving and James Hamilton', *United Presbyterian Magazine* (October, 1879); John Hair, *Regent Square, Eighty Years of a London Congregation* (J. Nisbet, 1899); William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D. LL. D.* in 4 Vols. (Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox, 1849-1852); Henry F. Henderson, *The Religious Controversies of Scotland* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1905); William Jones, *Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Edward Irving, A.M.* (London: John Bennet, 1835); Charles Kegan Paul, 'Edward Irving' in *Memories* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1883); Williams Landels, *Edward Irving* (London: Young Men's Christian Association, 1864); Jabez Marrat, 'Edward Irving' in *Northern Lights* (London: T. Woolmer, 1885); Robert Norton, *The Restoration of the Apostles and Prophets in the Catholic Apostolic Church* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1861); J.E. Ritchie, *The London Pulpit* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1854); William Tabert, *Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1856); John Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain During the Nineteenth Century* (Longmans, 1885); Norman L Walker, 'The Trials of Irving and Campbell of Row' in *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* (April, 1867); Washington Wilks, *Edward Irving, An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography* (London: W. Goddard, 1854).

Arnold Dallimore's 1983 biography of Irving gives us a clear and gripping picture of Irving's life, though the book is heavily dependent on the works of Margaret Oliphant and Thomas Carlyle for the historical content.⁵ Dallimore suggested that a study of Irving is important in light of his charismatic beliefs. He endeavoured to describe Irving 'without bias and [as] presenting historic truth with honesty and accuracy', and his work gives us the impression of Irving as a pathetic figure who finally failed both in his life and thought. Dallimore has not been without his critics from among Irving's admirers, including David W. Dorries.⁶

David Bebbington has explored Irving's role in British Evangelicalism and 'reputation for erratic ways' in his excellent and highly influential book, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*.⁷ He has portrayed Irving as one of the leading figures in early nineteenth-century Evangelicalism, especially in his taking up pre-millennialism which 'was part of the Romantic inflow into Evangelicalism'.⁸ But Irving's main contributions rested, for Bebbington, on his 'capacity for blending Evangelical religion with the latest intellectual fashions'.⁹ For Bebbington, who saw Romanticism as having an 'immense potential affinity for religion', Irving was a Romantic figure who represented 'the dramatic, the extraordinary and the otherworldly element in religion'.¹⁰ Bebbington's arguments concerning Irving's debt to Romanticism, and concerning Irving's key role in exemplifying the relations between Romanticism and religion, contributed significantly to a renewed interest in Irving's career; indeed, Bebbington's work is the standard work on British Evangelicalism, and his views on Irving are highly influential.

⁵ Arnold A. Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving, the Fore-Runner of the Charismatic Movement* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983).

⁶ Dorries made a serious criticism of Dallimore's work, when he says 'we believe that until a positive assessment of Irving's Christology is recognized, contemporary writers such as Dallimore will continue to publish superficial condemnation of his doctrine' in his PhD thesis 'Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy, Centering Upon Edward Irving's Doctrine of Christ's Human Nature' (University of Aberdeen, 1987), 8.

⁷ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 79.

⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁹ Ibid., 80.

¹⁰ Ibid., 81.

Sheridan Gilley's article-length study of 1993 approached Irving's thought, especially his millennialism, from the perspective of a religious and cultural historian, and provided a vivid account of the cultural environment that helped to mould Irving's thought. According to Gilley, the spirit of the Evangelical Revival, which began in the 1730s, profoundly shaped Irving's London ministry. Irving's distinctive character and profound spirituality placed him in the ranks of the 'otherworldly' Christians—as, for example, when Irving denounced the British religious culture as a 'worldly world'.¹¹ He was also, for Gilley, extremely conservative in his religious thought. 'Irving's theology', Gilley insisted, 'was at heart founded on the profoundest antiliberalism and anticatholicism'.¹² Gilley agreed with Gordon Strachan, whom we will consider shortly, that Irving's Pentecostalism was unique and did not directly affect the modern Pentecostal movement. He saw Irving's millennialism as being deeply influenced by the French Revolution and the arrival of French refugees in England, and this can be discerned in Irving's *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God*. This gloomy pre-millennialism, according to Gilley, reflected Irving's 'melancholy strain', and stemmed from the difficulties he experienced as a probationer for the ministry, his thwarted love affair with his former pupil, Jane Welsh, his wife's ill-health and his children's early deaths. Gilley viewed Irving's millennialism as offering the believer little hope, in contrast to the more optimistic, post-millennial Adventism.

Let us turn now to the doctoral theses. Irving's life and thought were explored in Paul Ewing Davies' doctoral thesis, 'An Examination of the Views of Edward Irving Concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ', submitted to New College, Edinburgh (then the theological college of the United Free Church of Scotland) in 1928.¹³ This work stimulated later scholarly exploration about Irving and his theology. Davies did not question the

¹¹ Sheridan Gilley, 'Edward Irving: prophet of the millennium,' in *Revival and religion since 1700* (ed. J. Garnett and C. Matthew; London: Hambledon, 1993), 98.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Paul E. Davies, 'An Examination of the Views of Edward Irving Concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ' (PhD thesis, Edinburgh, New College, 1928).

Church of Scotland's decision to depose Irving in 1833; rather, he portrayed Irving's views as being genuinely heretical. Indeed, he described his thesis as 'a study in heresy the theology of Edward Irving', which, he said, 'may warrant some consideration and study as an example to others of wrong emphases and faulty logic'.¹⁴ He interpreted Irving's 'apparent absurdities' as emerging from 'his strenuous reaction to other orthodox absurdities in his religious environment'.¹⁵ Davies' approach was highly critical: while agreeing with some parts of Irving's argument on the humanity of Christ, he rejected the large portion of Irving's ideas. In most cases, Davies agreed with the criticisms that had been previously made by Irving's contemporaries. Since the work of the Holy Spirit was for Irving more important than the person of Christ in the work of redemption, Davies claimed that for Irving 'there is little or no difference between union with the Spirit and union with the Son'.¹⁶ He claimed that the general tendency of Irving's thought was to make the Holy Spirit, rather than Christ, the object of faith.¹⁷

Another doctoral thesis was submitted to New College only two years later by Andrew Landale Drummond, who approached Irving from a very different perspective in his historical and psychological study.¹⁸ Drummond explored Irving's gift of the Holy Spirit in terms of 'Glossolalia', and noted that this phenomenon was a distinctive characteristic of Irving and his circle, the Irvingites, although he also recognised that Irving himself was not personally involved in the practice of speaking in tongues. Drummond analysed the 'Irvingite herd' in comparison with other sects, and he explained glossolalia from the standpoint of psychology. Emphasising the outward phenomena Drummond concluded that Irving was misled by 'false lights' and that his management of the manifestations was

¹⁴ Ibid., 5f.

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶ Ibid., 219.

¹⁷ Ibid., 220.

¹⁸ Andrew Landale Drummond, 'Edward Irving and the Gift of Tongues: An Historical and Psychological Study' (PhD thesis, Edinburgh, New College, 1930).

muddle-headed.¹⁹ Irving's over-emphasis on the Holy Spirit led him to the view that the Spirit's work in Christ and the Spirit's work in men were similar in their nature but different in degree, and that this led to the practice of 'Perfectionism' in the Irvingite circle.²⁰

Drummond subsequently produced a very readable biography of Irving.

In 1953, Henry Charles Whitley produced another doctoral thesis on Irving, entitled 'Edward Irving, An Interpretation of his Life and Theological Teaching', which was also prepared at New College, now home to the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh.²¹ Portraying Irving in a most favourable light, Whitley emphasised Irving's efforts to reform the theology of the Church of Scotland, efforts which ultimately rebounded upon himself and brought his destruction: 'Irving's mission was to rend the tomb of dead theology.'²² According to Whitley, Irving's ideas were difficult to sympathise with in their extremes, although his instincts moved in the right direction.²³ Later, Whitley published a short popular biography, *Blinded Eagle*, in which he maintained that Irving's passionate love for God had blinded him in a religious sense.²⁴

In his doctoral thesis to the University of Edinburgh, in 1972, C. Gordon Strachan explored Irving's view of the Holy Spirit in relation to his ideas on the humanity of Jesus Christ.²⁵ Strachan subsequently published a well-received book based on his thesis and entitled *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*.²⁶ Strachan believed that the connection between Irving's ideas of the human nature of Christ and his ideas of the gifts of the Holy Spirit would be found in 'Irving's understanding of the former as preliminary and

¹⁹ Andrew L. Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle* (London: J Clarke & Co Ltd, 1937), 272, 277.

²⁰ Drummond, thesis, 17f.

²¹ Henry C. Whitley, 'Edward Irving, An Interpretation of his Life and Theological Teaching' (PhD thesis, Edinburgh, New College, 1953).

²² Ibid., 230.

²³ Ibid., 235.

²⁴ Henry Charles Whitley, *Blinded Eagle: An Introduction to the Life and Teaching of Edward Irving* (London: SCM, 1955).

²⁵ Gordon Strachan, 'The Relation of the Holy Spirit to the New Humanity of Jesus Christ, with special reference to the Writings of Edward Irving' (PhD Thesis, Edinburgh, New College, 1972).

²⁶ Gordon Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973).

preparatory to his understanding of the latter'.²⁷ Strachan regarded Spirit baptism as the focal point in Irving's views of Christology and the Holy Spirit, and he showed its essential role in Irving's theological framework. In Strachan's view these two ideas should have been regarded as other than heretical; by systematising or formulating Irving's theology, Strachan sought to demonstrate Irving's theological orthodoxy. However, Strachan's study was questionable in defining Irving as a 'Pentecostal' or 'Charismatic'. Since his account has been so widely accepted, it has left a strong impression which cannot be easily altered. Applying the label of 'Pentecostal' to Irving does specify one of his theological characteristics; but there are other characteristics, which were arguably more important to his thought and which require a deeper exploration of his varied writings.

Further scholarly investigations, which aimed to vindicate the orthodoxy of Irving's Christology, were conducted at the University of Aberdeen by Jacob Jamani Nantomah and David William Dorries.²⁸ Nantomah investigated Irving's view on the doctrine of the incarnation, and then explored the usefulness of Irving's Christology as an evangelistic tool in his African homeland of Ghana. Nantomah's methodology was shared by Dorries. According to Dorries, Irving struggled against both a conception of a God who had made a 'contract' with humankind and the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement, and embraced instead an 'incarnationally-revealed God [who] could not stop his love even at the boundaries of man's fallen and sinful nature'.²⁹ Following his historical and theological exploration, Dorries concluded that Irving's Christology, which was supported by the writings of some early Church Fathers, had been 'mistakenly' and 'unjustly' condemned by the Church of Scotland.

²⁷ Ibid., 21.

²⁸ David William Dorries, 'Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy, Centering Upon Edward Irving's Doctrine of Christ's Human Nature' (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1987); Jacob Jamani Nantomah, 'Jesus the God-Man: the doctrine of the Incarnation in Edward Irving in the light of the teaching of the Church Fathers and its relevance for a twentieth century African context' (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1982).

²⁹ Dorries, 'Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy', chapter IV – B.

A systematic theological approach to Irving's theology was undertaken by Graham McFarlane in a doctoral thesis at King's College, London, in 1990.³⁰ McFarlane contributed significantly to the study of Irving through his effort to systematise aspects of Irving's teaching, arguing that Irving overcame a long-standing Western Christological tendency, which had separated the doctrine of God as Father, Son and Spirit from an understanding of the incarnation, and which had ultimately made the role of the Spirit redundant.³¹ McFarlane's chief interest was in the place of the Holy Spirit in Irving's Christological thought, claiming that Irving's doctrine of the Trinity and understanding of the incarnation placed emphasis on the Spirit's place in the redemptive narrative. Through a theological analysis of three topics – divine being, human being, and Christ – McFarlane presented Irving's view of salvation and the grace of God; arguing that the source of grace and its beneficiaries could be found in God's plan of salvation through the incarnation. He claimed that Irving's controversial view of the humanity of Christ could only be properly understood as a direct consequence of Irving's understanding of the Trinity and of human nature. Thus he regarded Irving's doctrine of the incarnation as an expression both of God's justice and God's grace and glory.³² McFarlane hoped to open 'a new morning of theological possibilities' through the exposition of Irving's understanding of the Incarnation.

Substantial research into Irving's views on pre-millennialism was conducted by Mark Patterson in his doctoral thesis, 'Designing the Last Days', submitted to King's College, London, in 2001.³³ Patterson explored the Albury Circle's expectation of the Second Advent, to be followed by the millennium, while he did not make distinction between the ideas of Irving and those of his fellow members of the Albury Circle, which needs to be clarified. For understanding Irving's theology, the Second Coming of Christ was, in

³⁰ Graham McFarlane, 'Christology and the Spirit in the teaching of Edward Irving' (PhD thesis, London, King's College, 1990).

³¹ Graham McFarlane. *Christ and Spirit: The Doctrine of the Incarnation According to Edward Irving* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), 4.

³² *Ibid.*, 135.

³³ Mark Patterson, 'Designing the Last Days: Edward Irving, The Albury Circle, and the Theology of The Morning Watch' (PhD. thesis, King's College, London, 2001).

Patterson's point of view, 'made the lens through which every event and doctrine was interpreted and applied'.³⁴ The imminent Second Advent and establishment of the pre-millennial kingdom were portrayed, by Irving and the Albury Circle, 'as the essence of the Divine mind, the goal of God's labours, and the product of historical progress wherein his will was manifested'.³⁵ The downside of Patterson's research was that in expounding Irving's pre-millennial theology he depended heavily on the *Morning Watch* rather than Irving's main writings.

Another valuable recent study of Irving is the PhD thesis of David Yat Tong Lee which was submitted to Brunel University in 2003. Based mainly on the previous two works of Graham McFarlane and of Mark Patterson, Lee endeavoured to display Irving's theology and ecclesiology as based on a 'Christ-centredness emphasizing both the humiliated and exalted humanity of Christ'.³⁶ He claimed that Irving's understanding of the humanity of Christ was an 'over-arching principle' to integrate all his other Christian doctrines.³⁷ 'By re-appropriating the humanity of Christ as his theological centre', according to Lee, 'Irving reconstructed and re-interpreted the traditional Calvinist Christian theme in a relational, organic, unitary, missional, ethical and eschatological manner'.³⁸ He claimed that Irving's understanding of the church as the body of Christ had a very eschatological character, putting the church firmly, together with Christ, in the eternal plan of God.³⁹ Irving's idea of the church as a restored image of God, within the divine activity in history, for Lee, brought 'the eschatological community towards the glorious *parousia*'.⁴⁰ Lee argued that Irving's theological perichoretic structure as well as his incarnational ideas were influenced by Coleridge's philosophical understanding, especially Coleridge's Logos philosophy and views

³⁴ Ibid., 99.

³⁵ Ibid., 245.

³⁶ David Yat Tong Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving' (PhD Thesis. Brunel University, 2003).

³⁷ Ibid., 54.

³⁸ Ibid., 186.

³⁹ Ibid., 22, 187.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 70, 105.

on the will.⁴¹ However, Lee agreed with G. McFarlane's argument, that Irving did not merely follow Coleridge's teaching but adopted it in his own theological system, demonstrating that 'Irving was a creative and innovative thinker in his own right'.⁴² Lee was in line with G. McFarlane in stressing Irving's understanding of the Trinity as a dynamic and inter-active interpretation and also believing that creation, incarnation, redemption and millennialism were events that revealed the triune God through the Son.⁴³ Irving's theological reconstruction was, Lee concluded, 'to connect the Spirit's normative operation in the church with the Spirit's activity in the humiliated and ascended humanity of Christ'.⁴⁴ Lee's approach as a systematic theologian is very different from my own approach as an historian and historical theologian, and he is less interested in the historical development of Irving's thought. None the less, he has made major contributions, and his work of systematic theology largely supports my own conclusions about the historical development of Irving's Christology.

In a beautifully written and engaging PhD thesis at Murdoch University in Australia, Peter Elliot has recently explored Irving's theology through the lenses of Romanticism, and has built upon David Bebbington's invaluable work in perceiving Irving and his theology within larger Romantic conceptions and through his relations with such leading Romantic thinkers as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle.⁴⁵ Seeing the roots of Irving's Romanticism in his Scottish background, Elliot described Irving's life and theology within the Romantic mindset. Influenced by Isaiah Berlin's view that Romanticism as 'the largest recent movement to transform the lives and the thought of the Western world', Elliot argued that 'only Romanticism is capacious enough to coherently accommodate all of Irving's

⁴¹ Ibid., 76.

⁴² Ibid., 33.

⁴³ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁵ Peter Elliot, 'Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis' (PhD Thesis. Murdoch University, 2010).

theological passions'.⁴⁶ Irving's Christology and pro-charismata views were, for Elliot, both infused with an egalitarianism that was in tension with his more hierarchical Presbyterian context, and he processed Christian theology through the filter of a Romantic worldview.⁴⁷ Elliot portrayed Irving's incarnational idea as a profoundly Romantic conception and as representing the ultimate encounter with the divine sublime.⁴⁸ According to Elliot, the trajectory of Irving's career, including even his loss of authority in the Newman Street congregation, was a result of his 'pursuing his Romantic agenda'.⁴⁹ Both Irving's Romanticism and his personality led him, Elliot maintained, to propose and pursue grand visions, for which there could be no compromise. Indeed, Irving's uncompromising sense of righteousness was described as a 'Romantic metaphor'.⁵⁰ Inspired by Bebbington's path-breaking work on Evangelicalism and Romanticism, Elliot sought to develop a new understanding of the mutual influences between Irving and two major Romantic thinkers – Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle. He suggested controversially that Samuel T. Coleridge had been influenced by Irving's ideas. Elliot's doctoral thesis on the role of Romanticism in shaping Irving's thought and accounting for his influence is an important contribution to the growing body of Irving scholarship.

The Aims and Methodology of this Thesis

Our task in this thesis is to explore the thought of Edward Irving in its historical context. If we regard the previous works as highlighting aspects of Irving's theological and religious thought, it is time to set out the theology of Edward Irving in its integrity, and within the larger context of his life and times. Our aim is not to defend all aspects of Irving's theology; rather, by taking a broad view of Irving's ideas, we will assess his thought as a whole and

⁴⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), 1; Peter Elliot, 'Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis' (PhD Thesis. Murdoch University, 2010), 319.

⁴⁷ Peter Elliot, 'Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis', 276, 313.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 224, 320.

consider his larger contributions to early nineteenth-century British religious and intellectual culture. This thesis aims to provide a clearer understanding of Irving's theology and life, demonstrating that Irving had a coherent theological framework that included a view of Christ's genuine humanity. I do not claim that Irving's incarnational ideas were the source of his other ideas or doctrines; rather, I argue that we can comprehend his overall theology more clearly when we view it from the perspective of his idea of Christ's genuine humanity, often referred to as his notion of Christ's sinful flesh. Throughout his life, Irving endeavoured to form a coherent theological system. The humanity of Christ was at the heart of Irving's theological project and this conception helps us to bring his other ideas together and to understand his larger theology.

Irving's rather 'eccentric' Christology ('eccentric' at least in the eyes of his contemporaries) will form the central theme of my analysis. From his early writings, I found, his incarnational idea was widely spread throughout his works on a variety of subjects.⁵¹ Indeed, I will argue, his other ideas can be easily understood when we review them in the perspective of his idea of the incarnation. In the first stage of the thesis, I will concentrate on his developing Christology, and then I will move on to explore his other ideas, which, I maintain, were broadly connected to his views of the incarnation.

My methodology will be that of an historical theologian. I will focus my efforts on exploring the relationships between his ideas – especially concerning his pneumatology, his millennialism, and his understanding of the Incarnation – by a careful, contextualised reading of his corpus of writing, including *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving*, *The Prophetical Works of Edward Irving*, and *The Morning Watch*. Irving's doctrine of the sinful nature of Christ's humanity played an essential role in several areas of his theological

⁵¹ There are a number of Irving's works containing his views on the incarnation, including *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra: Entitled the Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving in Five Volumes* (ed. Rev. G. Carlyle, London: Alexander Strahan, 1864-5; hereinafter called CW), *John the Baptist* in CW, *The Temptation* in CW, and *God's Glory in the Church* in CW.

project. I will explore, firstly, how his idea of the person of Christ worked in his understanding of the Trinity; secondly, how the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit could be applicable to both human beings and Christ in the same manner; and thirdly, how the work of the Spirit in changing sinful flesh to a glorified body, within the expectation of the *Parousia*, became associated with Irving's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The idea that Christ's 'sinful flesh' is essential to Irving's theology will be our working hypothesis in explaining his larger theological framework. In exploring Irving's thoughts and life, I will consider also the theology and ministry of some of his close associates, including Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, John McLeod Campbell of Row, and Alexander J. Scott.

The first chapter will provide a brief sketch of Irving's life, in which I will highlight several key historical events that affected the formation of his theological views, including his commitment to a close connection of Church and State. I will also explore several factors that shaped Irving's sense of personal identity and his distinctive religious character.

In the second chapter, I will consider the central place of the doctrine of the atonement for understanding the religious context of early nineteenth-century Scotland. The tension between the Reformed doctrine of predestination, which was clearly stated in the Westminster Confession, and the doctrine of that Christ had died for the sins of all humankind, which many found to be clearly expressed in Scripture, would deeply trouble the early nineteenth-century Church of Scotland and lead to significant heresy trials in the early 1830s. Irving's theological and cultural interactions with a number of Scottish thinkers, including Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, John McLeod Campbell, and Alexander J. Scott, will provide vital background for the following chapters.

The next chapter will focus on Irving's Christology. Irving's Christology is intimately related to his Trinitarian views, including the dynamic interactions of the persons of the Trinity. The chapter will introduce his controversial idea of Christ's 'sinful flesh' and explore his ideas through a critical reading of his own writings, along with a consideration of

some of the key influences on his thought. In this consideration of influences, we will seek to determine the origins of Irving's distinctive Christology.

The fourth chapter will discuss Irving's understanding of spiritual gifts and their relationship to his Christology. There were, for Irving, important parallels between Christ's baptism at the river Jordan and believers' lives after Pentecost. I will illustrate how Irving's conception of Christ's 'sinful flesh' contributed to his understanding of the manifestation of spiritual gifts among humans.

In the final chapter, I will explore Irving's views of the millennium, the thousand-year reign of the saints on earth, which many Christians believed would precede the last judgement and the end of the world, and will show how Irving's conception of the millennium related to the theme of 'sinful flesh', as well as to the larger context of the influence of Romanticism on religious thought, as this has been explored in the important work of Bebbington and Elliot. I will begin by reviewing how Irving adopted pre-millennialism, or the belief that the Second Coming of Christ in glory would precede the beginning of the Millennium and that the world was destined to grow steadily more sinful and debased before Christ's Second Coming. I will proceed to consider the message that Irving intended to deliver to British society through his writings on Christ's coming kingdom, and will offer a new interpretation of his millennialism in the light of his Christology and thus demonstrate that the whole corpus of his theological writings has a coherent theological framework. By interpreting Irving's prophetic works on the Second Coming in light of his Christology, we can appreciate the essential unity of Irving's theological contribution.

Chapter I. Edward Irving's Thought in its Historical Context

Introduction

The life of Edward Irving represents a dramatic theological journey, inspired by a burning and passionate love for God. Almost all of Irving's theological ideas, from his Christology to his Millennialism, had their focus on humanity's desperate desire to approach God through the person of Christ. For Irving, the reconciliation of God and humanity through Christ was attainable mainly through the work of the Holy Spirit, which was a key to his theological framework. Irving's distinctive ideas resulted in severe criticisms in his lifetime, and finally led to his being deposed from the ministry of the Established Church of Scotland. Irving's personal life, along with his theological ideas, shows his passion to follow the spirit of Christ. His life and his theological ideas had worked interactively. Irving's final months, from his deposition to his death, had moments of high tragedy, and this has led some to view him as a pathetic or failed figure. When we re-examine his life in the context of his ideas on the Person of Christ, however, a more vivid image of him comes to light, which helps us to come to a much fuller understanding of him.

In this chapter I will present some factors which should be reviewed in a preliminary way prior to exploring Irving's theological ideas, along with some depictions of events from his early life – between his birth and the time of his settlement in London. This is not a biography of Irving, but rather some salient observations concerning Irving's early life and ideas.¹ The chapter will be organised thematically, rather than chronologically.

¹ This thesis does not provide a brief biography of Edward Irving because the story of his life is well known. For a recent brief and judicious account of Irving's life, see Stewart J. Brown, 'Edward Irving,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. 29, 378-82.

A. A Scottish Minister; the Identity of Edward Irving

A.1. Son of Scotland

Edward Irving was born the son of a tanner on 4 August 1792 in Annan, Dumfriesshire, ‘a peaceful little Scotch town’ in the southwest of Scotland.² He was the second son of Mary and Gavin Irving, who had three sons and five daughters. Edward’s father Gavin Irving was by all accounts an honest and prosperous tanner by trade. Irving’s paternal ancestors were said to be the descendants of French Protestant refugees, and one of his forefathers had been a parish minister in Annan.³ Edward’s decision to enter the ministry of the Established Church was inspired in part by the example of this ancestor.

Mary Lowther, Irving’s mother, was ‘the handsome and high-spirited daughter of a small landed proprietor in the adjacent parish of Dornoch’. She was reputed to have been descended from Martin Luther, the German Reformer.⁴ Irving used to say of his mother: ‘There are no such women, now, as my mother’.⁵ For Irving, his mother was a model of ‘an excellent house-mother’ who ‘had much of fluent speech, thrifty, assiduous, wise, and full of affection and tender anxiety for her children and husband’.⁶ In Irving’s mind this ideal motherly image remained throughout his lifetime and this led him to give up his passionate love for the intellectual Jane Welsh, and instead to marry the more domestic Isabella Martin, who reminded him more of his mother. Isabella was devoted to Irving throughout their

² Margaret O. W. Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving* (2nd ed; London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1862), I, 1.

³ Concerning Irving’s French paternal ancestors, I consulted Mrs Oliphant’s *The Life of Edward Irving*, W. Andrews’ *Edward Irving: A Review*, footnote p.15., and T. Carlyle’s ‘Death of the Rev. Edward Irving,’ in *Fraser’s Magazine* (January, 1835), 99.

⁴ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 1; Washington Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography* (London: W. Goddard, 1854), 2; W. Jones, *Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Edward Irving, A.M.* (London: John Bennett, 1835), 3.

⁵ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 10.

⁶ Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences* (ed. C. E. Norton; London: J. M. Dent, 1932), 172.

marriage, and during Irving's later years she showed a maternal affection for him, caring for him tenderly at his bedside during his final illness.

In Gavin and Mary Irving's home, 'the children must have been trained to habits of obedience and to a reverential spirit'. When later Irving preached on the importance of strict obedience to God, he recalled his parents saying; 'Do my bidding and ask no reasons. Obey!' 'And why should I obey?' 'Because your father or your mother hath commanded you'.⁷

Irving's hometown, the burgh of Annan, was a small town near the Solway Firth, and although separated from England by only a few miles, it had a definite Scottish social and religious tradition. Margaret Oliphant gives us a vivid picture of the religious life of Annan during Irving's youth: 'Household psalms still echoed of nights through the closed windows, and children, brought up among few other signs of piety, were yet trained in the habit of family prayers'.⁸ The community was so small that people knew each other well. Agriculture was booming, and corn-laden sloops sailed peacefully from Waterfoot of Annan to the Solway Firth and on toward England, through 'a naked peel-house and austere towers of defence on both sides of the border', which were reminders of the former border warfare between the two nations.⁹

A.2. Attending Seceder Congregation

Irving's first school teacher was Margaret Paine, or 'Peggy Paine', an older woman, who taught Irving and his elder brother John the alphabet and basic elements of literacy. Later, Irving moved on to Annan Academy, which had been recently founded.¹⁰ Here Adam Hope taught literature and languages, and Irving acquired from him 'something of that old

⁷ William W. Andrews, *Edward Irving: A Review* (Glasgow: Hobbs. 1900), 16f.

⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 7.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People, 1560 – 1830* (London: Collins, 1969), 475.

primeval basis of rigorous logic and clear articulation'.¹¹ Possessing an extensive knowledge of the classics, Hope taught Irving until he entered university. Thomas Carlyle, who would become Irving's lifelong friend, was also one of Adam Hope's pupils. Carlyle described his teacher as 'an extremely proud man' and 'an original, meritorious kind of man', and religiously he was 'a Calvinist at all points, and Burgher Scotch Seceder to the backbone'.¹²

Irving would attend Sunday services at a Secession church in Ecclefechan, following his school teacher Adam Hope, 'a rigid Seceder', instead of attending the local parish church. Although it required a walk of six miles twice a Sunday, Irving rather enjoyed the journey across the moors, passing the pasturing sheep, having the sense of God's presence with him (Ps. 23). For Adam Hope and his attendant pupils, the venerable Seceder minister, the Rev John Johnston of Ecclefechan, was their 'only Minister'. Irving's other family members duly attended their local parish church, and tolerated their 'drunken Clergyman', believing that it was 'ungenteel' for Irving to join the Sunday 'pilgrimage to Ecclefechan'.¹³ According to Carlyle, the religious mood of Annan was easy-going and one could sense that 'A man who awoke to the belief that he actually had a soul to be saved or lost was apt to be found among the Dissenting people, and to have given up attendance on the Kirk'.¹⁴ From the age of ten, Irving seems to have continued to attend Seceder Sunday services in Ecclefechan regularly until he went to College – not every Sunday but at least occasionally.

The Rev John Johnston of Ecclefechan was regarded as a man 'of stern theology, of simple life, of unbending moral standard and practice.'¹⁵ Johnston did not preach on the topics of patronage or secular politics, but rather mainly on such universal themes as the

¹¹ T. Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 175.

¹² *Ibid.*, 174f.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 176; Stewart J. Brown, 'The end of the old Established Church ideal in Scotland, 1790 – 1850.' in *The Scottish Churches and the Union Parliament 1707-1999* (ed. James Kirk, Edinburgh: Scottish Church History Society, 2001), 75-102.

¹⁴ T. Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 176.

¹⁵ Robert H. Story, 'Edward Irving,' in *St. Giles Lectures, Third Series, Scottish Divines, 1505-1872* (Edinburgh: Macniven and Wallace, 1883), 226.

divine Law.¹⁶ Scottish Seceders were usually very conservative theologically and opposed to any laxity in matters of doctrine and church discipline. Their claim to be returning to the primitive principles of the church can be matched with Irving's later efforts to revive the church's primitive doctrine.

As a young boy, with a sensitive and receptive mind for his age, Irving's experience of pilgrimages to the Secession meeting-house was deeply formative. He would have learned much from his long walks to Ecclefechan with his more mature companions and will have developed personal discipline. When he came back to Annan soaked with the evangelical rhetoric of the Rev. Johnston, Irving's mind might well have been full of the ideas of the omnipresence of God, the divine presence of Christ within, and His work of salvation for all human kind. Unfortunately, we have no testimony from Irving himself about these 'pilgrimages'. Instead, Carlyle said that Irving and he were 'the last product' of it, and that this experience was 'ineffaceable through life' for both of them.¹⁷ Robert H. Story evaluated Irving's journeys in his *St. Giles Lectures* as being the most remarkable boyhood experience that formed Irving's character: 'The solemnity, the moral intensity, the national fervour, of this covenanting company left, too, their impress on Irving's character.'¹⁸

A.3. The Covenanting Tradition

Along with his Seceder church experience, the young Irving was drawn to the Covenanters' graves scattered around the district. This Lowland town of Annan was full of the heritage of the Covenanting tradition with many Covenanters' graves in the area, and the legendary

¹⁶ T. Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 177.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Robert H. Story, 'Edward Irving,' in *St. Giles Lectures*, 226. A. L. Drummond, one of Irving's biographers, evaluates Irving's early pilgrimages to the Secession church that they 'had prepared the way for entering into the spirit of the rejuvenated Church of Scotland, then reacting from prudential "Moderatism" to the absolute claims of "high-flying Presbyterianism"; that meant hide-bound Calvinism in doctrine and the Church's demand for spiritual independence from the State.' (A. L. Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle*, 65)

stories of their desperate struggles on battlefields and also their individual martyrdoms. These heroic tales as the 'highest epic and romance of national faith' were told around the 'ingleside, kitchen fire, or in the farm-house chimney corner', and 'thrilled and palpitated around the villages of Annandale'. Irving evidently had an ardent ear for these legendary tales.¹⁹ Irving visited almost every one of the Covenanters' graves 'in the moors and solitudes where they fell, martyrs to the doctrine of Christ's sole supremacy in His house'.²⁰

While the Covenanting movement arose from religious motivation, it also contained a strong element of national sentiment. Scotland was regarded as a nation covenanted with God, and the Covenanters had, for a time, united much of the nation behind their vision.²¹ Scottish identity expressed in its religious and national faith was sparked up when Edinburgh rioted against the reading of the English Church Prayer Book including Laud's Liturgy on 23 July 1637. Through the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, Scottish religious and national identity was vividly expressed for many of its people. The Covenanting tradition contained a revolutionary system in a nation's struggle for freedom, as well as having theological significance.²²

Irving's later opposition to ecclesiastical patronage, which had enabled the ruling classes to select their type of minister for parish churches within the Church of Scotland, was influenced by his veneration for the Covenanting tradition. Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754), the Secession Church leader, withdrew himself from the Established Church because, he thought, 'the prevailing party in this established Church ... was carrying a course of defection from our Reformed and Covenanted principles'. When they proclaimed the right of congregations to elect their own ministers – and thus opposed the Church of Scotland's

¹⁹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 8, 9, 19.

²⁰ Irving, *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty* (London: L. B. Seeley, 1827), cxci.

²¹ Stewart J. Brown, 'The end of the old Established Church ideal in Scotland, 1790 – 1850', 75.

²² James B. Torrance, 'The Covenant Concept in Scottish Theology and Politics and its Legacy.' *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 34 (1981), 226.

submission to the Patronage Act of 1712 – Erskine and his colleagues defined their position largely in terms of the Covenanting tradition.²³

As Oliphant has described, the Covenanting tradition impressed Irving with the theocratic model of ancient Scotland, a Christendom whose sole head is Christ.²⁴ In the young boy's mind, however, a religious patriotism was enough. A passage from one of Irving's later writings indicates the influence of his early veneration of the Covenanters:

The blood of martyrs mingled with our running brooks; their hallowed bones now moulder in peace within their silent tombs, which are dressed by the reverential hands of the pious and patriotic people. And their blood did not cry in vain to heaven for vengeance. Their persecutors were despoiled; that guilty race of kings were made vagabonds upon the earth. The church arose in her purity like a bride decked for the bridegroom; religious principles chose to reside within the troubled land; bringing moral virtues in their train, and begetting a national character for knowledge, industry, enterprise, every domestic and public virtue, which maketh her children an acceptable people in the four quarters of the earth.²⁵

Irving's veneration of the Covenanting tradition lasted his whole lifetime, and shaped his religious identity as well as his patriotic Scottish Protestantism.

A.4. Historical National Viewpoint

At the time of Irving's birth, the Lowlands seem to have been largely free from the feelings of Scottish nationalism – which was partly derived from the Romanticism, and partly derived from memories of the historical conflicts between England and Scotland. Yet, during the century before his birth, the Glorious Revolution, the Massacre of Glencoe, the Darien

²³ A.L. Drummond and J. Bulloch, *The Scottish Church, 1688-1843* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1973), 41ff. It is not my intention to discuss whether the Secession Church is in the line of the Covenanting tradition, and the other, the Established Church, was not. Rather, I am looking at Irving's perception of this legacy.

²⁴ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 197; E. Irving, *The Prophetical Works of Edward Irving in Two Volumes*, ed. G. Carlyle (London: Alexander Strahan, 1867; herein after called *PW*), I, 47.

²⁵ E. Irving, *For the Oracles of God, Four Orations and for the Judgement to Come* (London: T. Hamilton, 1824), 238.

Scheme, the establishment of the Hanoverian monarchy, and successive Jacobite Risings had all testified to continuing tensions between England and Scotland.²⁶

The passing of the Treaty of Union in 1707 had been a struggle, and the Scottish public was far from unanimous. 'Most Scots welcomed the Union but at the same time regretted that it had been necessary and wished that they could be free of England insolence'.²⁷ But many Scots had opposed the Act of Union from the beginning and their opposition had continued. Many Scottish nobles were suspicious of English motives, complained of unjust treatment, especially when they thought that they had less privilege than their counterpart across the border.²⁸ Most complaints about the Union in Scotland were subdued after about 1746 by a subsequent flourishing economy, including their access to English colonies. In the case of Scottish clergymen, although many were not satisfied with the Union, they knew that it could keep the Protestant religion secure; otherwise, the restoration of the House of Stuart might restore Roman Catholicism to the ascendancy. Thus, the Scottish people did not completely or unanimously welcome the Union, and continuing opposition to the Union led to expressions of nationalism in some radical cases.²⁹

Though the Jacobite rising of 1745 had been largely opposed in the Lowlands, it did leave a melancholy memory even in Dumfriesshire, which survived even at the time of Irving's childhood. However, it is also true that the final defeat of the Jacobites freed the Lowland Scots from fear of political and religious upheaval.³⁰ After the '45 rebellion, the traditional communal ties between Highland chieftain and common clansman, and Lowland heritor and tenant farmer, had faded out, with the emergence of a class-based society, which

²⁶ About Scottish Nationalism, see H. J. Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism* (London: Faber, 1969) and Graeme Morton, *Unionist Scotland: Governing Urban Scotland 1830-1860* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 1999).

²⁷ Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, 34.

²⁸ Peter Hume Brown, *A Short History of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1951), 292.

²⁹ One of the interesting and unforgettable episodes in this era is the Porteous Riot which was vividly described in Walter Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*. This story, based on historical fact, gives political, social, and economical context of that time.

³⁰ A. E. MacRobert, *The 1745 Rebellion and the Southern Scottish Lowlands* (Cambridgeshire: Melrose Books, 2006), 144.

appeared clearly in the industrial areas such as Glasgow, where Irving served as assistant minister to Dr Thomas Chalmers.³¹

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many in Scotland boasted that their educational system was ‘superior to that of their counterpart in England’, and noted that it had produced such intellectual giants as David Hume, Adam Smith, William Robertson, and Walter Scott. ‘Schools in every burgh and virtually every parish – Knox’s long unfulfilled dream – provided the mass of the population with a basic education surpassing that available in most European countries’. Irving was both a product of this Scottish educational system and also of the ‘Scottish Enlightenment’, the unique flowering of intellectual culture, when Scotland was ‘briefly the cultural leader of Europe’.³² Irving was proud of his Scottish education and this pride lasted through his lifetime. He also placed great emphasis on the role of the Church in Scotland’s educational system. Because the schools and the universities were ‘maintained by the learning and oversight of the clergy’, Irving maintained, ‘the intellect of our land grew and flourished by the preaching of the word’.³³ Although not a nationalist in the nineteenth-century sense of the term, in his heart Irving always cherished the love of his homeland. Although most of his ministerial career was spent in England, his mind was filled with an abundant love of Scotland, while he felt that England was like a ‘foreign part’.³⁴ His lifelong friend, Thomas Carlyle, portrayed Irving’s ministerial work in

³¹ Daniel Szechi, ‘1745 The Jacobite Rebellion,’ *BBC History* (June, 2007):50-3.

³² Eric J. Evans, ‘Who Gains Most when Scotland and England Joined in 1707,’ *BBC History* (May, 2007):26 – 30, 28.; Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church, 1688-1843*, 45; D. Daiches, P. Jones & J. Jones (eds), *A Hotbed of Genius: The Scottish Enlightenment 1730-90* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968).

³³ E. Irving, *A Pastoral Letter From the Baptized of the Scottish Presbytery in London Addressed To the Baptized of the Scottish Church Residing in London and its Vicinity and in the Southern Parts of the Island* (London: James Nisbet, 1828), 18.

³⁴ Irving, ‘A letter to the Rev. Thomas Chalmers, D.D. Minister of St. John’s Church, Glasgow. July, 1823’, in *For the Oracles of God, Four Orations and for the Judgement to Come, An Argument in Nine Parts*, xxi.

London as that of a ‘missionary’ rather than a pastor.³⁵ Irving’s nationality was closely linked with his religious identity.

George IV’s visit to Scotland in 1822 was a momentous event for Scots because it was the first visit of a reigning Hanoverian monarch. By wearing a tartan kilt the King greatly enhanced his popularity in Scotland. On this royal visit, Carlyle, with his ‘private radicalism’, was disgusted with the fulsome ‘loyalty’ and mocked the Edinburgh people, who dressed in ‘black coat and white duck trousers’ for the King, as ‘Scandalous flunkeys’. Instead of witnessing the historic ‘King’s arrival’, Carlyle left the City to travel to Galloway, and he was glad to find that all was comfortably rolled away on his return to Edinburgh.³⁶ There is no mention of the King’s visit, moreover, in Irving’s writings for during this time Irving was preparing for his forthcoming ministry in London; he was probably too preoccupied to pay much attention to George IV’s visit. In 1828, Irving would address *A letter to the King, on the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Laws, as it affects our Christian Monarchy*, in which he unfolded his theocratic vision of the British Constitution to his ‘Christian King’ George IV.

A.5. Irving’s Scotland in London

Irving’s Scottish mind-set was apparent when he started his London ministry as a minister of the Church of Scotland in the Caledonian Chapel in Hatton Garden in 1822. Arriving in London, Irving was concerned particularly for the life and spiritual health of young Scots residing in the capital. He noticed that most Scots staying in or around London did not regularly attend their mother church – the Church of Scotland – which meant, for Irving, that

³⁵ T. Carlyle, ‘A letter from Thomas Carlyle to Alexander Carlyle, 8 January 1825’, in C.R. Sanders, ed., *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1970), vol. III, 243.

³⁶ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 222f.

the Kirk was losing not only the one straying sheep of the biblical parable, but the other ninety-nine as well.³⁷ He further observed that many of the Scottish ruling classes attended the Church of England in London and went to the Episcopalian Church when they were in Scotland. Irving honoured the Church of England as ‘a true sister’ church of the Church of Scotland. However, for Irving, the desertion of their national church by many Scots was a ‘great evil to our nation’ and this would split the Scottish nation ‘more and more asunder’.³⁸ Irving thought that it would be an act of betrayal or ingratitude for Scotsmen to lose their Presbyterian and Reformed identity when they stayed in London.³⁹

But that man would be the most ungrateful of men, who, having been born and bred up in the privileges of Scotland, should not hold his country dear; and still more ungrateful would that man be, who, having been trained up in the sound faith and simple customs of the Scottish people, should slight the mother of his soul, or ever, with any heart, surrender himself to the care of another.⁴⁰

Shortly after his arrival, the congregation in Caledonian Chapel in Hatton Garden decided to build an enlarged church for their now overflowing congregation. On 19 May, 1823, the congregation, with Irving, ‘resolved that means be immediately taken for building a new National Scotch Church; that it be in connection with the Church of Scotland; that the doctrines, forms of worship, and mode of discipline of that Church shall be taught; and the same shall in all time coming be filled by a minister duly licensed to preach the Gospel by the Church of Scotland and ordained according to the rules of that Church’.⁴¹ For Irving, this new church was to be a symbol of ‘the gathering together of the scattered people of our

³⁷ Irving, *A Pastoral Letter From the Baptized of the Scottish Presbytery in London*, 7. Irving estimated that less than 1,200 out of 120,000 Scots residing in London were in communion with any churches. See the letter from Irving and 7 elders of the Scottish Church to T. Chalmers on 26 February 1827. New College Library, Edinburgh, Thomas Chalmers Papers [TCP], CHA 4.77.12.

³⁸ Ibid, 1 – 23.

³⁹ Liam Upton, ‘Our Mother and our Country: The Integration of Religious and National Identity in the Thought of Edward Irving (1792-1834).’ in *Religion and National Identity: Wales and Scotland c. 1700-2000*. (ed. Robert Pope; Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 255.

⁴⁰ E. Irving, ‘The Spiritual and National Benefits Resulting from the Erection of a New Church’, in *Thirty Sermons: preached during the first three years of his residence in London* (London: John Bennett, 1835), 125.

⁴¹ *Letters on Behalf of the Gaelic Chapel, Peel Correspondence, British Library, MS. Addnl. 40356, f. 136*; cited in George G. Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London* (Oxford: Becket Publications, 1979).

nation; and, therefore, we have given it the name of “National”.”⁴² He hoped this construction could be an example for other Church of Scotland congregations, and he trusted ‘that this may be the beginning of an era in the history of our church in this metropolis, when she shall take a character as an established church, and profit by all the service which she hath done for the sake of the Lord and her country’.⁴³ After exchanging several letters between Irving and Chalmers about the opening date, the new National Scotch Church, constructed in the Gothic style, was opened in May 1827 as ‘the finest place of worship outside the Establishment in London by far’, with Chalmers’ inauguration sermon.⁴⁴ ‘Throughout his London ministry Irving spared neither time nor trouble in trying to help Scottish adventurers in London, being careful to warn them of the dangers of “rising in the world”’.⁴⁵

A.6. Anti-Catholicism

The United Kingdom is an example of a state in which Roman Catholics were persecuted by Protestants. British and Irish Roman Catholics were denied many basic civil rights within the state until the series of relief acts which began in the last decades of the eighteenth century and culminated in the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829.

According to Linda Colley, ‘British identity was built on the common strands of Protestantism, shared economic priorities, the monarchy and a fear of the Catholic, continental Other’.⁴⁶ Tristram Hunt also gives us a similar assessment: ‘In England and, following the 1707 Act of Union, Britain, Protestantism underpinned an emerging national

⁴² Irving, ‘The Spiritual and National Benefits Resulting from the Erection of a New Church’, 124; Edward Irving to Thomas Chalmers, 26 March 1827, TCP, CHA 4.77.7.

⁴³ Irving, ‘The Spiritual and National Benefits’, 124.

⁴⁴ Edward Irving to Thomas Chalmers, 8 March 1827, TCP, CHA 4.77.14; A. L. Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle* (London: J. Clarke & Co, 1937), 103.

⁴⁵ Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle*, 99.

⁴⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992).

identity (self-governing, anti-Catholic, sober-minded and commercial) and a divine sense of Britain as a chosen nation'.⁴⁷ Scotland had its distinct characteristics, but it was contained within a larger state, Great Britain and (from 1801) the United Kingdom.⁴⁸

Irving's veneration of Scottish Protestantism can be seen in his historical account of the Church of Scotland. In *A Historical View of the Church of Scotland from the Earliest Period to the Time of the Reformation*, Irving traced what he defined as the spirit of the Scottish Reformation in the Celtic Church and the Culdee community, which had, according to Irving, 'maintained a noble resistance' against Roman episcopal authority. Irving even believed that the Gospel was 'preached in Britain by men of the apostolic age, and by the Apostles themselves' and he claimed support for this view in the writings of Eusebius, an ecclesiastical historian, Theodoret, a bishop of the Greek church, Gildas, an ancient historian, and Tertullian, a Church father.⁴⁹

It was a noble distinction, for Irving, that 'Scotland hath amongst the nations of the earth, that, come from what quarter they would, honest and humble Christian ministers have been ever received with open arms'.⁵⁰ Irving conveyed his historic understanding of these pre-Reformation Celtic and Culdee churches, with their 'primitive simplicity', 'orthodox faith' and resistance to Papal oppression, 'continuing to survive almost till the dawn of the Reformation' in Scotland.⁵¹ The medieval Roman Church, according to Irving, was on the other side of truth and light – alongside with paganism. By keeping a simple and primitive faith, the Celtic Church had characterized Scottish Christianity, rejecting 'Papal inventions' or 'Roman superstition', and preserved 'the love of religious liberty, and preference of a primitive church, without pomp or ceremonies, which have distinguished us amongst the

⁴⁷ Tristram Hunt, 'Protestantism: the Church that made the Nation?' *BBC History* (September, 2007), 32-4.

⁴⁸ Colley, *Britons*, 373.

⁴⁹ Irving, *The Confessions of Faith*, x – xiv.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xvii. Irving's view on this part of ecclesiastical history was based on his reading of the writings of Bede (c672 – 735) and George Buchanan (1506 – 1582).

nations of Christendom'.⁵² Opposition to the sacramental system and much of the doctrine of the Roman Church was, for Irving, a salient characteristic of the Celtic Church, and distinguished that Church from 'the synagogue of Satan'.⁵³ This was the ideal church image for Irving; 'they were the nearest to the lives of the Lord and his apostles which I have either read or heard of in any language or in any country'.⁵⁴

The Columban Church (another name for the Celtic Church) had confronted the Roman Church at the Synod of Whitby (664) with the agenda of 'two Easters' in Northumbria. As the discussion proceeded, the agenda had shifted to 'the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matt. 16:19) and King Oswy had given a speech in favour of those who had 'the keys', and this led to the Synod's declaration of a Catholic Easter. After the Synod, Colman, the leader of the Columban Church, had to retreat northwards with his followers – 'a sad-hearted little company', leaving their island-home Lindisfarne.⁵⁵ Although this Columban Church laid the foundations of the 'Northern Church', it just maintained its name as a minority in the north – the Culdees, and the Catholic Church was prevalent in Scotland until Knox's Reformation. Irving depicted the disappearance of the Culdees in the thirteenth century and the Scottish Reformation as follows:

I make no doubt that this was ordered in mercy to the suffering Church of Scotland, to the end that these confessors against the Papacy might be forced home upon the people, and preserve in the recesses of the country, the record of a better age, and plant in the memory and traditions of Scotland that love of primitive simplicity which, at the Reformation, burst forth in its strength, like Samson out of his sleep, and shook off the bonds of darkness with which it had been bound.⁵⁶

For Irving, who had a concept of Church and State as inseparable, the Scottish Reformation was the most crucial event in Scottish History. For him, the Church of Scotland

⁵² Ibid., lxxxi.

⁵³ Ibid., xxxvi – xxxvii.

⁵⁴ Ibid., xxxviii.

⁵⁵ John A. Duke, *The Columban Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 96-100; Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (ed. B. Colgrave and R. Mynors; Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), iii. 25-26: 299-311.

⁵⁶ Irving, *The Confessions of Faith*, lxxix.

was born into a new life by the Reformation.⁵⁷ The Scottish national church was, for Irving, based on an antique religious ethos which had kept a primitive faith tradition of the Nation.

For we think there never was a nation so blessed of heaven with the knowledge of Christ, and the pure administration of his church, as our nation hath been ever since the Reformation. Whether we regard the perfect soundness of our national faith, the wholesome severity of our ecclesiastical discipline, the purity and simplicity of our ordinances of worship, and the strict observance of God's holy day; whether we regard the exemplary lives of the ministers and elders of the church, and their diligent watchfulness over the religion and morals, and knowledge of the people, and their ministrations of every kind from house to house; we are filled with admiration and gratitude upon the remembrance of all the bounty, which God hath so largely expressed towards us and our fathers, and our fathers' fathers for many generations.⁵⁸

Throughout his life Irving favoured the Scottish Confession of Faith over the Westminster Confession of Faith. He thought that the Scottish Confession of Faith was 'the pillar of the Reformation Church of Scotland', while the Westminster Confession had exerted little or no influence upon our Church of Scotland.⁵⁹ For Irving, the Scottish Confession was 'the banner of the Church in all her wrestlings and conflicts', while the Westminster Confession was 'but the camp colours which she hath used during her days of peace'.⁶⁰ Irving's favourable attitude to the Scottish Confession was later re-confirmed when he developed his distinctive Christology.

When he resided in London, Irving's Scottish Protestantism came to embrace aspects of Anglicanism, developing into a 'British Protestantism' and a sort of 'Protestant chauvinism'. When the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in Westminster Parliament in 1829, Irving came to doubt 'whether we shall remain as an Anti-catholic and Protestant kingdom, or whether we shall take the seed of the serpent again into our councils and administration'.⁶¹ Irving's hostility to Roman Catholicism was palpable, and he regarded it as 'the great whore of Babylon', and the Pope as Antichrist. While the Act was aimed at

⁵⁷ Ibid., xic.

⁵⁸ Irving, *A Pastoral Letter*, 16.

⁵⁹ Irving, 'Notes on the Standards on the Church of Scotland', in *CW*, I, 601f.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 602.

⁶¹ Irving, 'On the Doctrine and Manifestation and Character of the Antichristian Apostasy', *The Morning Watch* I (March 1829; hereinafter called *MW*), 102.

achieving the fuller assimilation of Irish Roman Catholics into the civil life of the United Kingdom following the Union of 1800, Irving could not accept the proposition that the Irish would continue to be primarily Roman Catholics. He portrayed Roman Catholicism as the source of Irish poverty, 'root of the evil', and maintained that the Irish should be converted to the Protestant religion as 'a chosen generation, a peculiar people'.⁶²

Irving's Scottish Presbyterian and British Protestant chauvinism, with its depictions of the historic events of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, eventually led him to his pre-millennial idea; he regarded Britain as a nation united under God, standing up 'during the riot and warfare which superstition and infidelity held together over the earth'.⁶³ Since Britain was one of the only countries in Europe that had not been invaded by French military forces during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the country had been preserved from Continental turmoil with her Protestant religion intact, as well as preserved from 'Papal errors'.⁶⁴ In this context Irving regarded the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars as 'the day of great judgement of the Lamb'. His secured country was seen by him as the nation not only 'sealed before the day of wrath began' but also as the nation that would defeat the 'infidel power'.⁶⁵ I will explore this in more detail in the last chapter.

A.7. Romanticism

In the later eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, Romanticism exercised a profound and growing influence on European culture. Romanticism, with its emphasis on imagination, sentiment, inspiration, the sublime power and versatility of nature, and the role

⁶² Upton, 'Our Mother and our Country', 260-262.

⁶³ Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed of God: A Discourse on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse which relate to those latter times, and until the Second Advent* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1828), 539.

⁶⁴ E. Irving, *A letter to the King, on the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Laws, as it affects our Christian Monarchy* (London: J. Nisbet, 1828), 11.

⁶⁵ Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity*, 185-8.

of historical development in defining human identity, provided a rich context for art, music, literature, as well as politics, philosophy and society.⁶⁶ A reaction against mechanistic views of nature and the human mind, neo-classical forms in painting and sculpture, and the extreme rationalism of some Enlightenment thought, the Romantic Movement embraced diversity, plurality and complexity. One fruit of its idealistic striving after ultimate truths was conflict and disagreement.⁶⁷ As Isaiah Berlin observed, Romanticism was ‘the largest recent movement to transform the lives and the thought of the Western world’, and most prominent issues during the period should be seen within the perspective of this movement.⁶⁸ With its emphasis on human experience and feeling and its pursuit of transcendent, sublime truths, Romanticism contained within it the seeds of an ‘immense potential affinity for religion’.⁶⁹ Indeed, religion was central to the literary output of the Romantic Age.⁷⁰ Ryan has also noted that the Romantic Movement offered ‘a spirit of religious spontaneity and innovation’, and that this had a profound effect on the entire social and political milieu of the age.⁷¹ There was also a deep concern for subjective feeling; for Romantics, the main concern was ‘not what *is* but how it *seems* to [them]’.⁷²

A new emphasis on Scottish identity was one of the key elements of the Romantic Movement in Scotland. As we have seen, the Scotland of the Enlightenment was expressing great pride in its educational system and the intellectual contributions and European reputations of its learned clergy and other members of its literati.⁷³ Indeed, as Fitzpatrick has asserted, ‘the Scottish Enlightenment was in part an assertion of national identity by a

⁶⁶ For a fuller definition of ‘Romanticism’ and an account of recent work on Romanticism, see Peter Elliot’s excellent review of the historiography in his ‘Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis’ (unpublished PhD Thesis, Murdoch University, 2010).

⁶⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (London, 1999), 138; Elliot, ‘Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis’, 8.

⁶⁸ Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, 1

⁶⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 81.

⁷⁰ Simon Bainbridge, ed., *Romanticism: a Sourcebook* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 116.

⁷¹ Robert M. Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789-1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 29.

⁷² Lilian R. Furst, *Romanticism in Perspective: A Comparative Study of Aspects of the Romantic Movements in England, France and Germany* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1969), 58.

⁷³ See, chapter I, A.4.

country which had lost its statehood'.⁷⁴ The emerging Romanticism, with its veneration for the Jacobite elements in Scottish history, and its sentimental portrayals of national defeats, martyrs and 'lost causes', portrayed Scottish national identity 'often in the context of alienation and exile, as the ideal Romantic persevered towards a noble and idealised goal'.⁷⁵

The alleged poetry of Scottish bard Ossian, who was said to have been part of an ancient iron-age civilisation in the Scottish Highlands, gained European attention for its rich Romantic expressions, and the Ossianic poetry may have acted as a 'spiritual ancestor' for the poetic works of Robert Burns and Walter Scott. Supposedly translated by the Scottish poet, James Macpherson, and published in the 1760s, Ossian's poetry depicted the emotions and values of people living close to nature, through a tender, simple language coming from the heart.⁷⁶ The Ossianic poetry gave a fresh voice to many of the alternative strains already coursing through later eighteenth-century European culture in reaction to the rationalist materialism and radical scepticism of some thinkers of the Enlightenment.⁷⁷ Ossianic characteristics also eventually promoted the development of modern Scottish nationalism; indeed, Ossian's implicit Scottish nationalism was perceived as an attractive feature among readers outside the British Isles.⁷⁸ George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822, the first royal visit of a Hanoverian to Scotland—as it was famously stage-managed by Sir Walter Scott—also promoted Romantic visions of Scotland with its glorification of Highland culture, of the kilt and the bagpipe, and of clan loyalties.⁷⁹ As Fiona Stafford has maintained, the Scotland of Romanticism was both 'a wild place where the imagination could roam freely' and 'an

⁷⁴ Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Enlightenment,' in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*, ed. Iain McCalman (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 299.

⁷⁵ Elliot, 'Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis', 28.

⁷⁶ Fiona Stafford, 'Scottish Romanticism and Scotland Romanticism,' in *A Companion to European Romanticism*, ed. Michael Ferber (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 54.

⁷⁷ Sante Matteo, 'Ossian and *Risorgimento*: The Poetics of nationalism,' in *Romanticism Across the Disciplines*, ed. Larry H. Peer (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998), 33.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁹ Brown, *Chalmers*, 211.

inhospitable environment where sensitive plants were likely to perish under the severe influences of the Kirk and the critics'.⁸⁰

It was under the influence of the Romantic Movement, with 'a new appreciation of the dramatic, the extraordinary and the otherworldly element in religion', that Irving came to maturity.⁸¹ As we will observe, the English poet and philosopher, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was arguably the 'most influential representative' of British Romanticism, and following his move to London Irving would become a keen student of Coleridge.⁸² Irving's predilection towards 'antique' expressions of sentiment was drawn in part from Romantic celebrations of national history, and in part from his love of Elizabethan English literature; he could at times seem to act consciously the role of a 'Romantic genius', using grandiloquent language in the cause of Spiritual Religion.⁸³ Significantly, Irving carried a miniature copy of Ossian continually in his waistcoat pocket – as did Napoleon—and Irving's constant reading of Macpherson's sentimental translations, with their rich Romantic language, no doubt greatly affected his own theological expressions.

Irving's Romanticism finds expression in his early career, prior to his meeting with Coleridge. In his farewell sermon to the congregation at St John's, Glasgow, in 1822, Irving clearly demonstrated 'Romantic characteristics: an advocacy of the benefits of abandoning customary paths; a central role for feelings and experience; an incipient anti-authoritarianism'.⁸⁴ His move to London was said to be suitable to his 'classically trained yet romantically inclined temperament and mind'.⁸⁵ In the early nineteenth-century London, there were believed to be many influences, derived from the French Revolution and German philosophy, that drew individuals away from a belief in God. Irving sought to play a heroic

⁸⁰ Stafford, 'Scottish Romanticism and Scotland Romanticism', 50, 63f.

⁸¹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 81.

⁸² Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 355.

⁸³ Fulford, *Romanticism and Millenarianism*, 9.

⁸⁴ Elliot, 'Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis', 113.

⁸⁵ Graham McFarlane, 'Reformed Theology in Scotland and the Netherlands,' in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*, ed. David Fergusson (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 360.

role, and deliver the community from these anti-Christian ideologies.⁸⁶ Irving would pursue this ideal, whatever the cost in alienation from the world; he would push himself to the limits in the search for religious truth. Irving's life seemed to represent the Romantic ideal, and he came to mirror what Reardon has described as the 'true romantic hero is an exile, a wanderer on the face of the earth. He has no real place in society, and society in truth alienates him'.⁸⁷

B. Early Life as Critical Moments in Irving's Theology

B.1. Solway Rescue

A childhood experience in scenic Solway formed one of the most dramatic moments in Irving's life. The Solway looks so different between its high and low tides that its changing appearance attracts many spectators. It is also very dangerous to wander on the tidal area because of the speed of the flowing water. One fine day, when the tide was out in Solway, Irving was walking on the extensive sands with his brother John and had forgotten everything, including the rising tide – they were 'absorbed in their own amusement'. Suddenly Irving felt a horseman snatch him with his brother John, throw them across the neck of the horse and gallop without pause, until they reached the higher bank safely. It was his uncle George Lowther, who had seen that his sister's children were at serious risk from the incoming tide in flood, which would have swallowed them, and he had no time even to explain the situation and who he was to the children.

⁸⁶ David Yat Tong Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving' (unpublished PhD Thesis, Brunel University, 2003), 187.

⁸⁷ Bernard Reardon, 'Religion and the Romantic movement,' *Theology*, 76 (1973), 408.

As Oliphant observed, if Lowther had arrived ten minutes later, ‘one of the noblest tragic chapters of individual life in the nineteenth century need never have been written’.⁸⁸ This dramatic story remained in Irving’s memory throughout his life.

B.2. Study in Edinburgh

In his thirteenth year Edward Irving, with his brother John, travelled to Edinburgh to study at the university, and Edward gained his A.M. three years later in April 1809. During his University time, Irving ‘determined upon the church as his future profession, and shaped his course accordingly’.⁸⁹

In his youth, Irving had read certain books, including *Milton’s Paradise Lost*, *Don Quixote*, *Tales from the Arabian Nights*, and *Ossian*, all of which shaped the later sentimental and romantic elements in his character.⁹⁰ Reading the poems of Ossian and the minstrelsy of the Border gave Irving not only his love for his native Scotland, but also revealed to him the tradition of the early medieval Culdees, who, it was believed, had struggled against the authority of the Papacy.⁹¹ According to Dallimore, Irving’s belief that the life of minister should be exciting, abundant, and thrilling and that a preacher should engage with a society in flux was a result of this wide reading.⁹² Irving would also later claim that Richard Hooker’s *Ecclesiastical Polity*, of which he found a copy in his neighbour’s farm-house in Annan, was also one of his favourite readings, and he would refer to ‘the venerable companion of my early days, Richard Hooker’.⁹³

⁸⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 16f.

⁸⁹ John Bennett, *Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Edward Irving, A.M.* (London: John Bennett, 1835), 6. It is doubtful whether Irving experienced a radical conversion or feeling of divine imminence. John’s *Biographical Sketch* is the only text which contains Irving’s determination to be a minister.

⁹⁰ In this period, many works conducted ‘a dialogue with religious texts’. Simon Bainbridge, ed., *Romanticism: a Sourcebook* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 116.

⁹¹ Irving, *The Confessions of Faith*, lxxxi; PW, I, 249.

⁹² Arnold A Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving, Fore-Runner of the Charismatic Movement* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 26.

⁹³ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 31.

Irving was ‘distinguished in studies’ at University, and attracted special notice from Professors Christison and Leslie, by whom he was recommended as a mathematics teacher to a new school, known as the Mathematical School, founded several miles east of Edinburgh, at Haddington. After graduation from Edinburgh University, Irving visited his old Annan schoolmaster, Adam Hope, while Hope was teaching the Latin class. Thomas Carlyle, Irving’s future friend, was in the class listening to their conversation. According to Carlyle’s *Reminiscence*, Irving ‘looked very neat, self-possessed and enviable’.⁹⁴ Later Carlyle mentioned this moment again:

The first time I saw Irving was six-and-twenty years ago, in his native town, Annan. He was fresh from Edinburgh, with college prizes [Irving had taken the degree of A. M.], high character and promise; he had come to see our school master, who had also been his. We heard of famed professors, of high matters, classical, mathematical – a whole Wonderful of Knowledge: nothing but joy, health, hopefulness without end, looked out from the blooming young man.⁹⁵

B.3. Times of Haddington and Kirkcaldy

Having finished a first session in the Divinity Hall of the University of Edinburgh, Irving went off to Haddington as a teacher of mathematics because he needed to support himself. He continued his Divinity studies as a ‘partial student’. In Haddington, Irving was remembered as ‘a tall, ruddy, handsome youth, cheerful and kindly disposed’, and he gained the confidence of his pupils, who were actually ‘not very much younger than the young teacher’.⁹⁶

It is while staying in Haddington that Irving met a girl – his future love, but who unfortunately would not become his wife – Jane Welsh, a daughter of Dr John Welsh. She was a highly intelligent, animated young girl, with ambitions to excel in literature, and her

⁹⁴ T. Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 179f.

⁹⁵ Thomas Carlyle, ‘Death of the Rev. Edward Irving,’ *Fraser’s Magazine* (January, 1835): 103.

⁹⁶ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 36.

father, the principal medical man of the town, wanted to educate her like a boy of that time, although her mother ‘hoped for nothing higher in her daughter than the sweet domestic companion’; ‘Her ambition was roused; to be educated like a boy became the object of her entire thoughts, and set her little mind working independent projects of its own.’⁹⁷ On her tenth birthday Jane burnt her doll on a funeral pyre, and concentrated on mastering an old Latin grammar. Irving would tutor this enthusiastic girl from six to eight in the morning, and then again after her normal school hours, and this continued from October 1811 to August 1812, and Irving’s tutoring of her ended when Jane was just over eleven.⁹⁸

Irving liked to have occasional outings with his pupils, and one day he took several pupils to St. George’s church in Edinburgh for a sermon by the celebrated Thomas Chalmers. This is the first occasion that Irving and Chalmers were in the ‘same assembly’, but this journey also had a memorable episode. When a church usher blocked the way for Irving and his pupils to occupy the one remaining pew in the church, Irving exclaimed to the man, ‘Remove your arm, or I will shatter it in pieces!’⁹⁹ Such language was hardly appropriate in church, and the young Irving could be impetuous with a tendency to violence.

The apocalyptic tendencies of Irving’s mind were manifested during his time in Haddington, when he loved to ‘speak of the high destinies of the human race in heaven, where the saints were not only to be made “kings and priests unto God”, but were to rule and judge angels’. When Irving found that the local minister, Dr. Robert Lorimer, viewed this theological idea as unsuitable to ‘a profitable subject of a Divinity student’, Irving responded to this distinguished minister that ‘Dare either you or I deprive God of the glory and thanks due to his name for this exceeding great reward?’ But Lorimer would not be drawn into an

⁹⁷ Ibid., I, 37.

⁹⁸ Jane W. Carlyle, *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (London; New York: John Lane, 1903), Vol. II, 48f, 207. Jane’s precocious early maturity can be seen in her *New Letters and Memorials*, describing her falling in love, when she was nine, with a village boy of twelve or thirteen. The boy was the son of an Artillery Officer at the Barracks, Haddington, and his image ‘stamped itself on my soul forever’.

⁹⁹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 43.

argument, saying gently that ‘Well, well, my dear friend, both you and I can be saved without knowing about that’.¹⁰⁰

After spending two years in Haddington, Irving was called to be schoolmaster in a newly established academy in Kirkcaldy, on the recommendation again of Professor John Leslie of Edinburgh University. Irving was now twenty years of age. The condition of the school was not good, though he managed well. Despite his reputation for being unduly harsh in physically disciplining his pupils, he enjoyed popularity even outside the cramped classroom. Irving often brought his pupils to the shimmering coast of the Firth of Forth, and aroused their curiosity about nature. His pupils became known as ‘Irvingites’ in town.¹⁰¹

During his time in Kirkcaldy, Irving met Miss Isabella Martin, who was the eldest daughter of the Rev. John Martin (1769-1837). This parish minister of Kirkcaldy was an Evangelical clergyman, ‘of respectable learning and talents and deep piety’, who supported his future son-in-law, but had no significant influence on either his ministry or theology.¹⁰² ‘The daughter of the Manse’ became Irving’s wife in October 1823, and the Martin family became Irving’s ‘fast friends, not with concurrence or agreement certainly, but with faithful affection and kindness to the very edge of the grave’.¹⁰³

A life-long friendship with Thomas Carlyle also began in Kirkcaldy, where a new school was built in response to a growing local demand for education, and Irving’s Annandale junior, Carlyle, was invited to become schoolmaster. Carlyle did not make friends easily, but Irving’s warm greeting with his motto – ‘Two Annandale people must not

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., I, 45; A. Drummond, *Irving and His Circle*, 21.

¹⁰¹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 52. In Kirkcaldy, the name of ‘Irvingites’ was honoured as ‘a special and affectionate bond of fraternity’, not as a religious group which was used later.

¹⁰² Ibid., I, 61f.

¹⁰³ Ibid., I, 62f.

be strangers in Fife' – overcame Carlyle's reserve, and they became like brothers.¹⁰⁴ Irving opened his library to Carlyle, who later described it as 'a rough, littery, but considerable collection', and the writings of Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), and of David Hume (1711-1776) were very useful to both men. Carlyle later recalled a depiction of Irving's open mind at this time: 'his wide just sympathies, his native sagacities, honest-heartedness and good-humour, made him the most delightful of companions. Such colloquies and rich roving about, in bright scenes, in talk or in silence, I have never had since'.¹⁰⁵

B.4. Two Contrasting Figures (Irving's Assistant Ministry at St John's under Dr Thomas Chalmers)

After attending Divinity Hall for six years, Irving was fully licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy in 1815. As a probationer – a preacher, but still only a layman – Irving's sermons did not meet with a favourable response from the Rev. Martin's congregation.

In the summer of 1818 Irving left Kirkcaldy for Edinburgh to complete his prolonged course of Divinity study. In Edinburgh he joined the 'Philosophical Association', which consisted of seven or eight members, including Carlyle. Irving delivered a paper to this group on the subject of Bible Societies and it was, according to one of Irving's companions, 'full of thought, ardour, and eloquence, indicating large views and a mind prepared for high and holy enterprise'. This same companion also recalled that Irving was putting 'forth all his

¹⁰⁴ T. Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 185; A. Drummond, *Irving and His Circle*, 26. When Carlyle met Irving at Kirkcaldy, Carlyle felt uneasy about him. Carlyle had heard about Irving's distinguished academic record, successful teaching career, high regard from two Professors, work in the new Academy in Haddington, etc., which made Carlyle feel 'emulation, at least not as a malice envy'. Furthermore, at Dr. Waugh's house Carlyle was told that 'You seem to know nothing [about Annan]!' by Irving. The other thing we should consider is that after his marriage with Jane Welsh, Carlyle might always recall the fact that Irving was his wife's girlhood private teacher and at the same time her former love. These factors could affect his description of Irving.

¹⁰⁵ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 187.

powers of mind and warnings of experience upon the sermons'.¹⁰⁶ Concerning Irving's sermon, Dr. Grierson mentioned that his distinct style was within the standards of Scripture:

He was engaged to supply the pulpit of his old professor of divinity (Dr. Ritchie), when, in his noble and impassioned zeal for the supreme and infallible standard of Scripture, he startled his audience by a somewhat unqualified condemnation of ecclesiastical formulas, although he still unquestionably maintained, as he had conscientiously subscribed, all the doctrines of our orthodox Confession of Faith. He was very fearless, original, striking, and solemn.¹⁰⁷

During this time Irving dreamed about becoming an overseas missionary. Irving had a high view of the missionary enterprise, which he portrayed as 'proof of the sufficiency of the divine constitution to regenerate the most benighted and the brutalized of mankind'.¹⁰⁸ In Irving's eyes, missionaries were 'the apostles and true dignitaries of the modern church, [who] have addressed their understanding' to the other world.¹⁰⁹

In the summer of 1819, as he contemplated a possible future in the mission field, Irving received an invitation to preach a sermon at St. George's, where Dr Andrew Thomson was the minister.¹¹⁰ The celebrated Dr Thomas Chalmers, who ministered in Glasgow, was looking for a suitable person to assist in his parish work, which had become too sizeable for him to cope with alone. After preaching the sermon in front of Dr Chalmers, Irving awaited a call.¹¹¹ But a number of days passed with no word and Irving's initial expectations faded

¹⁰⁶ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 87.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., I, 83.

¹⁰⁸ Irving, *For the Oracles of God, Four Orations and for the Judgement to Come, An Argument in Nine Parts*, 254-58.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 257.

¹¹⁰ Rev. Andrew Thomson was a 'famous *malleus* of Theology in that time' and ministered in St. George's Church, Edinburgh. Irving's sermon was delivered in July 1819. (Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 208)

¹¹¹ Irving showed his confidence and desire to get a ministerial call from Chalmers in his letter to Martin dated the 2nd of August, 1819, saying that 'I am pleased with this, perhaps more so than I ought to be, if I were as spiritually-minded as I should be – but there is a reason for it. To you yet behind the curtain, *la voilà!* I believe it was a sort of pious and charitable plot to let Dr. C. hear me previous to his making inquiries about me as fit for his assistant...Oh, do you and all who wish me well, give me the only favour I ask, - the favour of your prayers.' (Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 92.)

into discouragement. He departed for a trip along the Scottish coast and then to Ireland, after first sending all his books and belongings to Annan.

He arrived in Belfast, and found himself viewed with suspicion; who was this tall figure carrying only a knapsack, without any clear motive for his journey? Only after meeting with a local Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Hanna (the father of William Hanna who later became Chalmers's son-in-law and biographer), was Irving freed from surveillance. He enjoyed the peaceful scenery and local hospitality of northern Ireland. While journeying among the 'sons of St. Patrick'¹¹², Irving received a letter from his father, in which there was enclosed the invitation from Chalmers to go to Glasgow.

Irving met Chalmers on 19 September (introduced by Andrew Thompson).¹¹³ When Chalmers asked for his decision on the assistantship, Irving was said to reply 'I am most grateful to you, but I must be also somewhat acceptable to your people. I will preach to them if you think fit, and if they bear with my preaching they will be the first people that have borne with it'. With this humble spirit he preached his first sermon to the 'fastidious congregation'¹¹⁴ in St John's in October 1819, and received a general welcome from them. It was a significant moment when the probationer received his personal call to a church, although only as an assistant. The commencement of his relationship with Chalmers seemed harmonious.¹¹⁵ Before describing Irving's ministry as assistant at St John's it would be helpful to outline the situation in the city.

Early nineteenth-century Glasgow was experiencing the social dislocations of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. The working classes were employed mostly in textile production, and they experienced long working hours for low pay. In addition to this, with the development of new technologies and the factory system, there was a reduced need for

¹¹² Irving, 'A letter to a friend in Kirkcaldy while he was awaiting Chalmers' return to Glasgow, 1st of September, 1819', in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 97.

¹¹³ Edward Irving to Thomas Carlyle, 25 September 1819, NLS.MS.1764.163.

¹¹⁴ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 98.

¹¹⁵ According to Thomas Carlyle, Irving's news from Glasgow was good from the start. *Reminiscences*, 211.

traditional craft workers, who often became unemployed and fell into serious poverty. These circumstances eventually led to social unrest. In 1820, there was a rising in the West of Scotland, which was crushed by the civil authorities. A growing pauperism, meanwhile, overshadowed the whole city.¹¹⁶

St John's Church was the largest and also one of the poorer parishes in Glasgow, and Chalmers was in charge of this area of ministry; 'Weavers, labourers, factory-workers, and other operatives, made up the great bulk of the community of the parish.'¹¹⁷ When Irving arrived in St John's, Chalmers was extremely busy with a new system he had devised for the relief of the urban poor. According to this system, rate-supported legal poor relief would be gradually eliminated in the parish, and the poor would come to be supported solely by the voluntary collections taken at the church doors. This would be accomplished by encouraging able-bodied paupers to find work, by appealing to neighbours and extended family members to assist impoverished individuals, with the church-door collections viewed as only a last resort. In addition to this, Chalmers, who viewed education as the long-term means to elevate the poor, opened two schools in the parish by 1822.¹¹⁸ 'In this parish', Margaret Oliphant observed, 'Chalmers set up the most surprising, splendid autocracy that has ever been attempted – an autocracy solely directed to the benefit of that little world of people in the most unlovely portion of Glasgow.'¹¹⁹ With his idea of godly commonwealth Chalmers 'offered a communal alternative to the social anxieties and suffering of early industrialization ... for common ideals represented by a national covenant with God'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ According to Carlyle's expression, it was 'a time of great rages and absurd terrors and expectations; a very fierce Radical and Anti-Radical time'. Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 212.

¹¹⁷ William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D. LL. D.* in 4 Vols. (Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox, 1849-1852), II, 230.

¹¹⁸ Most labouring classes sent their children to very poor quality schools, classes in garrets or rented-rooms with half-educated and ill-paid teachers, while the children of upper middle classes could afford a much better education. The two parish schools in St John's were opened on 16 July 1820. For the role of Irving as an examiner in the interviewing process of the school teacher candidates, see William Hanna, *Memoirs* II, 234.

¹¹⁹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 108f.

¹²⁰ Stewart J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 371f.

When Edward Irving started his assistant ministry at St John's in October 1819, he made an immediate and striking impression on the parishioners with his remarkable appearance, with descriptions including 'a wonderful grand gentlemen', 'Highland Chief', 'I took him for a cavalry officer!', and 'he's like a brigand chief'. But the response from Chalmers was 'whatever they say, they never think him like anything but a leader of men'.¹²¹ While Irving's distinctive appearance tended to leave an instinctive suspicion, his frank and warm character won the parishioners' confidence and friendship.

The four services in St John's – three on every Sabbath in the parish church and one in a school-house – were equally shared between Chalmers and Irving, as was the visitation of the parishioners' homes. According to Chalmers' own census of his parish, previous to Whitsunday 1819, there were 10,304 souls.¹²² Chalmers sub-divided St John's into twenty-five districts, each containing from sixty to one hundred families. Reviving an older, but largely neglected 'Scottish Presbyterian practice' Chalmers appointed to each district an elder, who had responsibility for providing moral and spiritual guidance for the inhabitants, and a deacon, who had responsibility for overseeing the relief of the poor in the district.

While Chalmers emphasized the practical aspects of the parish ministry (moral guidance, care of the poor, education of the children), Irving focused his attention on the parishioners' spiritual development. In his letter to a friend Irving observed: 'I have hardly encountered anything but the finest play of welcome and congeniality; and this very half hour have I returned from so pervading twenty families in our sorest district, and have been hailed as the bearer of good tidings, though I carried nothing with me but spiritual offers.'¹²³ In contrast to Chalmers' ecclesiastical statesmanship, Irving showed little concern for politics. While Chalmers dealt with the mass of the parishioners' physical needs and sought to realise his vision of the godly commonwealth, Irving was concerned with the spiritual

¹²¹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 99f.

¹²² Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers*, II, 230.

¹²³ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 107.

needs of individuals; 'He goes down among the crowds which are made of flesh and blood; he stands among them and calls out with courageous, tender voice that they are all men like others...he adds with manly and touching simplicity, "when you see people in the midst of nakedness and starvation."' ¹²⁴ He showed real sympathy by blessing and sharing their miserable 'half-sacramental breaking of the bread of sorrow'. ¹²⁵ It took two years for Irving to visit all the homes in the parish. Whenever he visited a home he gave his cordial salutation, 'Peace to be this house!', which was peculiar in that time, and attracted much attention. ¹²⁶ When he met children during his visitation, he laid his hands upon their heads and pronounced the ancient benediction: 'The Lord bless thee and keep thee!' This habitual practice led to the parishioners' welcoming Irving, and they anticipated a real blessing from the Lord. Irving thus made a great impression in his 'almost daily habit to make a round of their families'. ¹²⁷ However, Irving's preaching did not come up to expectations and when he arrived at the church for his turn to preach, some disappointed people would depart saying, 'It's no *himself* the day.' Chalmers' generous response to this was that 'Irving's preaching is like Italian music, appreciated only by connoisseurs'. ¹²⁸ Faithful and loyal service to Chalmers, and care for ordinary suffering humanity formed the core of Edward Irving's ministry in Glasgow.

The period under Chalmers would have opened Irving's eyes to the social problems of industrialisation and urbanisation and he was impressed by the energy and zeal for social reform shown by the 'Christian statesman'. It took him into the busy, everyday world and

¹²⁴ Ibid., I, 106.

¹²⁵ Ibid., I, 114.

¹²⁶ Mrs Oliphant's opinion on this was that Irving's long and silent contemplation of foreign missions probably led him to frame his mind according to the apostolic rule. Oliphant, I, 112; On this Irving's salutation, some angry weaver was reminded of the empty words of a politician and answered 'Ay, Sir, if there's plenty wi't!' Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 213.

¹²⁷ Irving, *Farewell Discourse to the Congregation and Parish of St. John's*

¹²⁸ Mrs Oliphant thinks Chalmers only partially understood Irving throughout their relationship; 'The statesman and philosopher watches the poet-enthusiast with a doubtful, troubled, half-amused, half-sad perplexity; - likes him, yet does not know what he would be at; is embarrassed by his warm love, praise, and gratitude; - vexed to see him commit himself; - impatient of what he himself thinks credulity, vanity, waste of power; but never without a sober, regretful affection for the bright, unsteady light that could not be persuaded to shine only in its proper lantern.' Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 116f.

involved him with the poor and marginalised, for whom he felt a real sympathy; this would influence his own future pastoral work. According to William Hanna, Chalmers' biographer, Irving's assistantship to Chalmers was remarkable for his character; 'His [Irving's] commanding presence, his manly bearing, his ingenuous honesty, his vigorous intellect, and above all, his tender and most generous sympathies melted the hearts of the people under him, and second only to that which his more illustrious colleague possessed was the parochial influence which, after a few months' visitation, he gained and most fruitfully exercised.'¹²⁹

However, at this point, we need to think of what made these two men (Chalmers and Irving) later grow so far apart. For example, when Chalmers addressed the issue of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, he observed, 'Mr Irving is wild upon the other side of me [Chalmers]. He sat opposite to me when I was speaking, as if his eye and looks, seen through the railing, were stationed there for my disquietude.'¹³⁰ When that same year Irving delivered a series of lectures on Prophecy in Edinburgh, Chalmers felt Irving's 'extravagance and obscurity have placed him far out of my sympathy and sight'.¹³¹ If we call the ministry of Chalmers 'magisterial', that of Edward Irving was 'radical'.¹³² While Chalmers focused on the material welfare of human beings, Irving focused on their spirituality.

Irving served as Chalmers' assistant for two years in Glasgow before he was invited to the sole ministry of the Caledonian Church in the London Presbytery. Carrying with him a letter of introduction from the Rev. Dr. Thomas Fleming, a respected Evangelical minister in Edinburgh, Irving departed for London. According to Fleming's letter, Irving had a broad mind as large as his gigantic body, and had a true and sound understanding of Scripture truth,

¹²⁹ Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers*, II, 285.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 220.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹³² This concept comes from the 16th century Reformation; while Martin Luther and John Calvin undertook Reformation with support from regional or wider authorities, the Anabaptist movement went alone and pursued spirituality. The former is called 'magisterial' and the latter called 'radical'.

‘possessing a particular faculty for performing converse with parish families about their spiritual interests’.¹³³ How would Irving cope with his London congregation?

Two years’ experience under Chalmers had taught Irving to recognise parishioners’ – especially labouring people’s – material needs. But his larger commitment was to fulfil the spiritual needs of the ‘scattered Scottish people in London’. In his letter to his father-in-law, Irving confided that ‘there are a few things that bind me to the world, a very few; one is to make a demonstration for a higher type of Christianity, something more magnanimous, more heroic than this age affects. God knows with what success’.¹³⁴ Irving’s grandiose expectations found expression in a remark while crossing the Gairloch: ‘You are content to go back and forward on the same route like this boat’, he observed, ‘but as for me, I hope yet to go deep into the ocean of truth’.¹³⁵

B.5. Unfruitful Dreams (His Love and Loss of Children)

Irving’s life-long friendship with Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh played a significant role in his life. This three-way relationship should not be omitted from the story of Irving’s life.

While staying in Edinburgh after leaving Kirkcaldy, Irving once met Jane and ‘found her a beautiful and vivacious girl, with an affectionate recollection of her old master; and the young man [Irving] found a natural charm in her society’. In Irving’s mind a little affection was aroused toward his former little pupil, who had grown up and blossomed into being a most beautiful and charming woman. When Irving saw she was attracted to some of his friends, Irving could not conceal his ‘pique and mortification’ and confessed to her that ‘I was jealous to hear you praise another man’.¹³⁶

¹³³ Letter from Rev. Dr. Thomas Fleming to Dr. Waugh introducing Mr Irving to the Caledonian Church in the London Presbytery, dated 13 Dec 1821. Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 132.

¹³⁴ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 141.

¹³⁵ Ibid., I, 143.

¹³⁶ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 85.

According to Jane Welsh, her father, Dr John Welsh, was a man of strong and noble character, who had greatly influenced her. She had a 'perfectly happy' memory of her father when once Dr Welsh took his daughter on a sudden journey to see a patient. They travelled at night and returned very early the next morning. While on the journey they had a pleasant and satisfying talk between father and daughter, and on the way home they had to return to the patient's house with much laughing for she had forgotten her watch.¹³⁷ But Dr Welsh's death in September 1819 was a great sorrow to Mrs Welsh and Jane. As their memory of Irving was a link with old times, Irving was always a welcome guest in their house.¹³⁸ In Jane's case, her attraction to Irving was connected to the memories of her father. Subtle links of sympathy bound them closely and formed a basis of mutual affection. Irving grew to love her and wrote her many letters and pieces of poetry, with a very affectionate salutation, 'My Dear and Lovely Pupil'.¹³⁹

Irving introduced Jane and her mother to his closest friend, Thomas Carlyle, at the end of May, 1821. Carlyle was having a desperate time in Edinburgh, barely supporting himself with irregular fees for articles and German translation, and needing loving care. Irving was concerned over Carlyle's lack of faith in the Christian God, but acknowledged his genius, and hoped Jane would do so as well. Carlyle found Jane 'beautiful, bright and earnest'; for her part, Jane was impressed by Carlyle's intellect and his offer to teach her German, but found him uncouth and clumsy.

Carlyle was captivated by the young beauty, and was soon suffering the pangs of jealousy, observing that 'it highly probable that if *flirting* were a capital crime, she would have been in danger of being hanged many times over'.¹⁴⁰ Carlyle was aware that Irving had

¹³⁷ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 40.

¹³⁸ Mrs. A. Ireland, *Life of J. W. Carlyle* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1891), 25.

¹³⁹ Carlyle also mentioned Irving's letters and poetry to Jane, his future wife, as being of 'very true and touching'. Almost all of Irving's letters have a salutation appropriate to the addressee; such as 'Your faithful friend', 'Your most affectionate husband'.

¹⁴⁰ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 41.

‘some vague understanding with another person’ in Kirkcaldy, being engaged to Isabella Martin.¹⁴¹ ‘Pledges given at Kirkcaldy bound Irving’s honour, but could not bind his heart’.¹⁴² Indeed, Irving tried to free himself from his engagement to Isabella Martin, and Jane Welsh also expected it; but all this ‘blind hope’ was in vain. There had recently been a civil trial relating to a scandal concerning a Scottish minister who had broken his engagement of marriage; and Jane Welsh did not want Irving to be a similar case. Finally, ‘Miss Welsh nobly refused to listen to the addresses of a man who was not free’, and Irving found himself ‘looking at the roses in another man’s garden’,¹⁴³ and wrote Jane as follows:

My well-beloved Friend and Pupil, - When I think of you my mind is overspread with the most affectionate and tender regard, which I neither know to name nor to describe. One thing I know, it would long ago have taken the form of the most devoted attachment but for an intervening circumstance, and showed itself and pleaded itself before your heart by a thousand actions from which I must now restrain myself. Heaven grant me its grace to restrain myself; and, forgetting my own enjoyments, may I be enabled to combine into your single self all that duty and plighted faith leave at my disposal. When I am in your company my whole soul would rush to serve you, and my tongue trembles to speak my heart’s fullness. But I am enabled to forbear, and have to find other avenues than the natural ones for the overflowing of an affection which would hardly have been able to confine itself within the avenues of nature if they had all been opened. But I feel within me the power to prevail, and at once to satisfy duty to another and affection to you. I stand truly upon ground which seems to shake and give way beneath me, but my help is in Heaven. It is very extraordinary that this weak nature of mine can bear two affections, both of so intense a kind, and yet I feel it can. It shall feed the one with faith, and duty, and chaste affection; the other with paternal and friendly love, no less pure, no less assiduous, no less constant – in return seeking nothing but permission and indulgence ... Forbid me not to draw you upwards to the love and study of your Creator, which is the beginning of wisdom ... Count for ever, my dear Jane, upon my last efforts to minister to your happiness, present and everlasting. From your faithful friend and servant, Edward Irving¹⁴⁴

Although Jane passionately loved Irving, she had to give up her feelings for her former teacher, and started German study with Carlyle, without closing her heart to Irving. Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh became a couple in October 1826, three years after Irving kept his honour and faith to a ‘daughter of the Manse in Kirkcaldy’. After his marriage to Isabella

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴² Robert H. Story, ‘Edward Irving,’ in *St. Giles Lectures*, 229.

¹⁴³ Ireland, *Life of J. W. Carlyle*, 26-8.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 27.

Martin, Irving seemed to distance himself from his memory of Jane Welsh, and he settled in his home; 'there was not so much intercourse between them – [Jane and Irving]'.¹⁴⁵ Irving's life with Isabella became peaceful and happy. However, Jane always occupied a special place in Irving's life.

What would have happened if Irving had married Jane? Late in her life, Jane Welsh mentioned with reference to Irving's spiritual phenomenon that 'there would have been no tongues, had Irving married me.'¹⁴⁶ It is very possible that Jane Welsh's less religious mind would have run counter to Irving's theological beliefs and spiritual exploration, and would have led to friction in their marriage. According to Mrs Alexander Ireland, if they had married, Jane would not have found happiness with Irving's religious and enthusiastic nature:

We cannot see that there was a strong likelihood of happiness between them as her mocking wit and fine sense of the ludicrous would have harmonised imperfectly with his simple, devout earnestness. And she might have come to despise him for his blind faith; whilst she could never despise Thomas Carlyle. That bitterness, at least, was spared her, in the ill-prospering of her first love.¹⁴⁷

However, this conclusion might be too strong. Human relationships can change according to their circumstances, and develop either for the better or the worse. Perhaps Irving's ministry would have been more successful if a 'Mrs Jane Irving' had either discouraged the 'tongues' or had come to support Irving's prophetic beliefs while helping him to control the excesses of some of his followers.

As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, Irving had drawn the ideal image of a woman from the person of his mother, who was closer in character to Isabella Martin than Jane Welsh. The ministerial tradition in his family – one of Irving's forefathers was a parish minister in Annan – and his mother's image of excellent house-wife who had wise and full affections would be matched by a 'daughter of the Manse', rather than a 'pure charming

¹⁴⁵ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 42.

¹⁴⁶ Lawrence Hanson, *Necessary Evil: The Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (London: Constable, 1952), 165.

¹⁴⁷ Ireland, *Life of J. W. Carlyle*, 28.

lassie' who seemed in strong need of 'fatherly love'. It is possible that Irving's unrealized passionate love drove him to devote himself more and more to divine matters, leaving behind 'worldly things'. This was accelerated by the subsequent losses of the fruits of his marriage with Isabella, their beloved 'flesh' – their children.

Loss of Children

The long engagement that had lasted eleven years had its fruit finally on 13 October 1823 when Irving and Isabella were married by the bride's grandfather at the manse of Kirkcaldy. Isabella gave her husband unquestioning support in his life and ministry, including his unusual spiritual developments. She never appeared in the forefront of her husband's public life, but remained a devoted and efficient helpmate until his death.

The Irvings opened their home in the London suburb of Pentonville to everyone, and Isabella provided the 'primitive kindness of the open house and shared meal, which is of all modes of charity the most difficult and the most delicate'.¹⁴⁸ Irving also found in Isabella's father a loyal friend and advisor. He enjoyed deep communication with his father-in-law and his many letters shared both the joyful and gloomy news of his household.

By the time of the laying of the foundation stone for the magnificent neo-Gothic building in Regent Square for the increasingly crowded congregation in Caledonian Chapel, Irving and his wife had their first child, who was named Edward. Irving penned this news to his father-in-law:

MY DEAR FATHER, – Isabella was safely delivered of a boy (whom may the Lord bless), at half-past eleven this forenoon, and is, with her child, doing well; and the grandmother, aunt, and father newly constituted, with the mother, are rejoicing in the grace and goodness of God ... I am well, and I think the pleasure of the Lord is prospering in my hand. A wide door and effectual is opened to me, and the Lord is

¹⁴⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 212.

opening my own eyes to the knowledge of the truth ... I feel I shall be much strengthened by your presence. Your dutiful Son, Edward Irving.¹⁴⁹

After their second child, Margaret, was born, their new joy was soon replaced by gloomy despair over the loss of their first child. The Irvings had travelled north to Kirkcaldy for the birth of Margaret, and there little Edward became seriously ill and died of whooping cough on 11 October 1825, just nine days after Margaret's birth. In a letter sent to his brother-in-law on the day of the death, Irving could not hide his grief.

OUR DEARLY-BELOVED FRIEND, – The hand of the Lord hath touched my wife and me, and taken from us our well-beloved child, sweet Edward, who was dear to you also, as he was to all who knew him. But before taking him, He gave unto us good comfort of the Holy Ghost, as He doth to all His faithful servants; and we are comforted, verily we are comforted. Let the Lord be praised, who hath visited the lowly, and raised them up!

If you had not been here yesterday and this day when our little babe was taken, you would have seen the stroke of death subdued by faith, and the strength of the grave overcome; for the Lord hath made His grace to be known unto us in the inward part. I feel that the Lord hath well done in that He hath afflicted me, and that by His grace I shall be a more faithful minister unto you, and unto all the flock committed to my charge. Now is my heart broken – now is its hardness melted; and my pride is humbled, and my strength is renewed. The good name of the Lord be praised!

Our little Edward, dear friend, is gone the way of all the earth; and his mother and I are sustained by the Prince and Saviour who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. The affection which you bear to us, or did bear towards the dear child who is departed, we desire it unto Him who hath sustained our souls, even the Lord our Saviour Jesus Christ; and if you feel grief and trouble, oh, turn to the edge of it against sin and Satan to destroy their works, for it is they who have made us to drink of this bitter cup.

Communicate this to all our friends in the congregation and church, as much as may be, by the perusal of this letter, that they may know the grace of God manifested unto us; and oh, William Hamilton, remember thyself, and tell them all that they are dust, and that their children are as the flowers of the field.¹⁵⁰

In the loss of his own child, Irving tried to find a consolation from the Lord. The death of his son drove Irving to embrace the idea that his Saviour had 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light'. Irving's sorrow renewed his hatred of 'sin and Satan who had made him to drink of this bitter cup'.

¹⁴⁹ Irving, 'a letter to his father-in-law, from Pentonville, 22nd July, 1824' in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 211.

¹⁵⁰ Irving, 'a letter to William Hamilton, from Kirkcaldy, 11th October, 1825' in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 245f.

In view of Irving's unfulfilled love affair with Jane, we might assume that Irving was less than contented with his marriage to Isabella Martin. But the death of their first son, Edward, offered them another chance in their marriage life; it drew Irving into a closer bond with his wife as is illustrated in this letter:

Yea, hath not the Lord made us for one another, and by his providence united us, against many fiery trials and terrible delusions of Satan? And as you yourself observed, has he not over again wedded us, far more closely than in any joy, by our late tribulation, and the burial of our lovely Edward, our holy first-born who gave up the ghost in order to make his father and mother one, and expiate the discords and divisions of our souls? Dear spirit, thou dearest spirit which doth tenant heaven, this is the mystery of thy burial on the wedding-day of thy parents, to make them for ever one ... My wife, this is not poetry, this is not imagination which I write; it is truth, rely upon it, it is truth that lovely Edward hath been the sweet offering of peace between us for ever; and so, when we meet in heaven, he shall be as the priest who joined us – the child of months being one hundred years old.¹⁵¹

The cloud of infant death continued to overshadow the early history of the household.¹⁵² The Irvings suffered the loss of another child, Mary, who was born in the spring of 1827 but died in December of the same year. Irving's grief eventually affected his theological thinking. In the dedicational preface to his wife in *Homilies on Baptism*, Irving revealed that this work had been inspired in part by the loss of his children.

I believe in my heart that the doctrine of the holy Sacraments, which is contained in these two volumes, was made known to my mind, first of all, for the purpose of preparing us for the loss of our eldest boy ... I believe it also, because, long before our little Edward was stricken by the hand of God in Scotland, I was led to open these views to you in letters, which, by God's grace, were made efficacious to convince your mind. I believe it, furthermore, because the thought contained in these homilies remained in my mind like an unsprung seed, until it was watered by the common tears we shed over our dying Mary. From that time forth, I felt that the truth concerning baptism, which had been revealed for our special consolation, was not for that end given, nor for that end to be retained; and therefore I resolved, at every risk, to open to all the fathers and mothers of the Christian Church the thoughts which had ministered to us so much consolation.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 302. After the loss of little Edward, Irving was separated from his wife Isabella for a long time. During this separation Irving wrote remarkable letters to Isabella, which are found in Oliphant's *Life of Irving*, Chapter XI.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, I, 414.

¹⁵³ Irving, *Homilies on Baptism* in *CW*, II, 247.

His *Homilies on Baptism* were published in 1828, and contained discussion of infant faith and infant Baptism. For Irving this was the ‘seed time’ for a more spiritual world, accelerated by the idea of the true humanity of Christ. Irving’s subsequent Homilies on the Lord’s Supper, which were closely related to his former homilies, were intended to be published by Irving himself but were not published until after Irving’s death, by G. Carlyle the editor of Irving’s *Collected Writings*. In these homilies, Irving developed his idea that the Lord’s Supper represented the connecting point between Christ’s body and the believer.¹⁵⁴ Irving’s emerging desire for the Second Coming of Christ is also revealed in his words when his son Edward died; Christ’s return in immortal flesh formed the basis of hope that he would one day see again his little Edward.

And therefore it is that I grudged not our noble, lovely child, but rather do delight that such a seed should blossom and bear in the kindly and kindred paradise of my God. And why should not I speak of thee, my Edward! Seeing it was in the season of thy sickness and death the Lord did reveal in me the knowledge and hope and desire of His Son from heaven? Glorious exchange! He took my son to His own more fatherly bosom, and revealed in my bosom the sure expectation and faith of His own eternal Son! Dear season of my life, ever to be remembered, when I knew the sweetness and fruitfulness of such joy and sorrow.¹⁵⁵

He would lose two more children (Samuel and Ebenezer). In these later cases, Irving would experience what he perceived as the incomplete manifestation of the divine miracles, which I will discuss later in this thesis.

C. Conclusion

Irving’s Scottish background helped to shape his religious identity, as well as to instil him with a patriotic affection for his homeland which he would carry throughout his life. He was

¹⁵⁴ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord’s Supper* in *CW*, II, 540-45.

¹⁵⁵ E. Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra: Entitled the Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty* [1827], (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1859), 72.

always proud of his Scottish national identity and Scottish Presbyterian traditions. Brought up in the Southwest of Scotland, Irving had been profoundly influenced by the stories of the Covenanters and had visiting many of the graves and monuments; his theocratic social ideal was largely modelled on that of the seventeenth-century Covenanters. Irving's veneration for national religious traditions influenced his decision to become a minister of Church of Scotland, although he had often attended the neighbouring Secession church, which had introduced him to strict religious principles. Believing that the early medieval Celtic Church was a proto-Presbyterian Christian Church, Irving viewed Presbyterianism as both part of an ancient tradition and a purer form of Christianity than Anglicanism. Throughout his life, Irving favoured the sixteenth-century Scottish Confession of Faith over the seventeenth-century Westminster Confession of Faith (with its English Puritan origins), even though the latter was the subordinate standard of faith in the established Church of Scotland. Later during the incarnational controversy, the Scots Confession of Faith would become a major support for his positions. In many respects Irving's ideas were becoming divergent from the early nineteenth-century Scottish Kirk's teachings, but his thoughts were full of affection for his home country and its religious history and traditions.

Although his main ministry would be carried out in London, his concern at least during the first few years in London focused on the Scottish expatriates who Irving worried were losing their Scottish religious identity either by attending local English churches, or by drifting into radical unbelief. Impressed by Chalmers's home mission efforts in Glasgow, Irving wished that he could find another man like Chalmers to lead a London mission, to save young Scots there from dissipations, and 'make Scotsmen as much the blessing of London, as they are said to be of foreign parts'.¹⁵⁶

While the traditions of the Scottish Enlightenment, as he encountered them at the University of Edinburgh, had helped to shape and discipline Irving's mind, the emerging

¹⁵⁶ Edward Irving to Thomas Chalmers, 24 December 1821, New College Library, Edinburgh, Thomas Chalmers Papers (TCP), CHA 4.18.6, Edward Irving to Thomas Chalmers, 1 October 1822, CHA 4.21.10.

Romanticism contributed to a religion of feeling, that included veneration for Scotland's religious traditions, and also brought to share Chalmers's commitment to elevating the condition of the lower social orders through a communal Christian ideal. Romanticism also instilled Irving with a love for rich and archaic language; his continual reciting of Ossianic poetry with 'sonorous elocution and vehement gesticulation' helped to form his mature preaching style.¹⁵⁷ Many who heard one of Irving's sermons became convinced that he was 'one of the most able and eloquent preachers in Great Britain'.¹⁵⁸ Irving's eccentricities, boldness, and admiration for the old Scotch worthies, attracted attention, and people flocked to a preacher 'who seemed to have come in the spirit and power of old Covenanters'.¹⁵⁹ In Irving's historical thought, Britain had been redeemed at the Reformation and sealed against the temptations to infidelity.¹⁶⁰ In an age that was increasingly impressed with industrial technologies and drawn to the new ideologies of liberalism, radicalism, and political economy, Irving called for a return to the Bible and a revival of apostolic Christianity. This veneration of the distant past further reflected his Romantic character, as he reproached what he viewed as the combined forces of infidelity and materialism in British society.

¹⁵⁷ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 31.

¹⁵⁸ W. Jones, *Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Edward Irving*, 65.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 367.

¹⁶⁰ Irving, 'The Plan of the Apocalypse', in *Thirty Sermons*, 340.

Chapter II. Edward Irving and the Idea of Universal Atonement

Introduction

The doctrine of universal atonement was not widely accepted in the nineteenth-century Scottish religious world. This idea, that Christ died for the sake of all human beings and whoever believes in Him can be saved, caused serious conflicts in Scottish society in Irving's time. Its historical significance lay not only in that it was a different doctrinal understanding from the federal theology, which was widely accepted within Scottish Presbyterianism, but also in that this idea provoked a wide range of responses.

While exploring the idea of universal atonement, I will first sketch the theological context of the early nineteenth century. Irving's idea of the person of Christ had a theological connection with his concept of Christ's atonement. Chronologically, Irving's acceptance of the idea of universal atonement came later than the emergence of his distinctive Christology. But even Irving's early writings suggest that he was moving towards the idea of universal atonement; for example, his first publication, *For the Oracles of God, Four Orations and for the Judgement to Come*, contains views that are similar in content to this doctrine.¹

In Irving's eschatological understanding of the Incarnation, the person of Jesus was considered not merely as the incarnate Word of God, but was also part of God's saving design for all humanity from the Trinitarian standpoint. God and man were united by virtue of the Incarnation. When we consider this in the context of Irving's theological framework, Christ's same humanity – so called 'sinful flesh' – had stimulated the notion of the human identification with Christ, that is, setting up a closer relationship between the Saviour and all

¹ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 28.

humanity. As a soteriological consequence of this, Irving's idea of universal atonement cannot be considered without reference to his incarnational theory.

From the historical point of view, the idea of universal atonement was linked in Irving's mind with the Scottish Covenanting tradition. Living in a nation covenanted with God, Irving felt that he should bring all its national members to Christ and convince them to obey God's commandments, thus restoring a godly commonwealth. Irving's 'Godly Commonwealth' ideal was not matched by that of his contemporaries, but rather it lay in the 'other world' in an eschatological manner. Thus his passion for the Covenanting tradition encouraged Irving to accept the idea of Christ's universal atonement.

A. The Traditional Presbyterian Theological Context

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the doctrine of predestination, which was an integral part of the orthodox creed of the Church of Scotland, was seriously challenged by a number of Scottish thinkers, including Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, John McLeod Campbell of Row, Alexander J. Scott, and Edward Irving.² These thinkers strongly protested against the idea that God eternally predestines some to salvation and the others to damnation regardless of individual's willingness to accept the Gospel—despite the fact that predestination was enshrined in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the subordinate standard of faith in the established Church of Scotland.

The Scottish Federal Theology Tradition

In the Scottish Federal Theology tradition, individuals could not enjoy an assurance of faith in God. Instead, they felt they should always be doing religious work, such as demonstrating

² D. Chambers, 'Doctrinal attitudes in the Church of Scotland in the pre-disruption era: the age of John McLeod Campbell and Edward Irving,' *Journal of Religious History* 8 (1974), 159-182.

repentance or praying, in order to prove their salvation in Christ. According to James Torrance, this form of covenant theology, or federal theology, was initially expounded in Scotland by Robert Rollock, the first principal of Edinburgh University, in 1596, and it became the standard of Scottish Reformed orthodoxy for the next 250 years.³ Although it was expounded on the basis of the biblical concept of ‘Covenant’ – the relationship between God and his people – Scottish federal theology produced the concept of God as a ‘contract-God’, who requires every individual to fulfil certain conditions in order to obtain divine grace. The common believers came to think of God as one whose love is conditional upon the human being’s repentance and faith, instead of perceiving God as a father who loves all humanity and freely forgives them through Christ Jesus. This legalistic concept of God, combining with the doctrine of predestination, naturally placed emphasis on the doctrine of a limited atonement. The Westminster Confession of Faith was the first reformed Confession to embody this ‘federal scheme’, and under its influence a legalistic interpretation of faith was widely preached in Scotland. The religious emphasis moved from what God has done for humanity in Christ, which was in accordance with the early Reformed tradition of Calvin and Knox, to what we have to do to know that we are among the elect and in covenant with God.⁴

The early nineteenth-century controversy was not the first time that the doctrine of predestination had been brought into question in Scotland. Similar issues had been raised in the Marrow controversy of the early eighteenth century. Stimulated by the re-publication of Edward Fisher’s seventeenth-century tract, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, a number of

³ James B. Torrance, ‘The Covenant Concept in Scottish Theology and Politics and its Legacy.’ *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 34 (1981), 227. In England, the federal theology was expounded by Dudley Fenner in 1583 and William Perkins in 1590.

⁴ About the discussion of the Scottish federal scheme, see James B. Torrance, ‘The Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology.’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26 (1973), 295-311; James B. Torrance, ‘Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology.’ in *The Westminster Confession in the Church today: papers prepared for the Church of Scotland Panel on Doctrine*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron, (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 40-55.

Scottish thinkers had explored anew the knowledge of grace and the relation between law and grace.⁵ Taking a federal approach to the two covenants—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace—the so-called ‘Marrow men’ (promoters of Fisher’s treatise) believed that Christians were no longer under the covenant of works since they were dead to the law in Christ. According to Fisher, every individual could enter into the covenant of grace because ‘in this covenant there is not any condition of grace or law to be performed on man’s part by himself; no, there is no more for him to do, but only to know and believe that Christ hath done all for him’.⁶

Although the Marrow men never denied the importance of renouncing sinful behaviour in daily Christian life, their theological position embraced the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith, and seemed to revive the controversial idea of Antinomianism. Although they were condemned by the so-called ‘Black Act’ of the General Assembly of 1720, the Marrow men claimed that simple believers could approach God for Fatherly forgiveness in spite of their sinful and unworthy nature. To obtain God’s salvation they approached Him simply in faith; repentance was not viewed as an essential condition to secure their personal salvation. It was, they insisted, a freely given salvation that God offered to all believers, which needed no holiness of life or repentance. The Marrow tradition was later referred to during McLeod Campbell’s trial in 1831, when he was charged with teaching universal atonement in a manner similar to that of the Marrow men.⁷

The Church of Scotland of that time and emerging of the Evangelical Group

From the mid-eighteenth century, two clerical factions, or parties, clearly emerged within the Church of Scotland. The Moderate party, which developed amid the patronage conflicts of the 1750s, reflected the tolerant, rational, and optimistic ethos of the Enlightenment,

⁵ Henry F. Henderson, *The Religious Controversies of Scotland* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1905), 25.

⁶ Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London: Matth, 1648), 117.

⁷ *The whole Proceedings before the Presbytery of Dumbarton, and Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, in the Case of the Rev. John McLeod Campbell, Minister of Row, including the Libel, Answers to the Libel, Evidence, and Speeches* (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1831).

emphasized the issues of ecclesiastical order, rationality, and social progress. Through their support for lay patronage, Moderates attempted to place ‘moderate and literary’ men in Church livings and university chairs, which they believed would help to ‘disseminate Enlightenment thought through the hierarchy of social orders’, and lead to have ‘a general improvement in social manners and morals’.⁸ Although the Moderate party would dominate the Presbyterian courts of the Established Church until 1833, its influence was receding as the Romantic Movement grew in influence in early nineteenth-century Scotland.

The Moderates’ counterpart was the Popular or Evangelical party, which had its origins in the early eighteenth-century Orthodox party and became known as the ‘Popular party’ amid the patronage conflicts of the 1750s. The Popular or Evangelical party adhered to the strict Calvinism of the Westminster Confession, believing firmly in the total depravity of human nature and accepting the doctrine of predestination.⁹ Stressing the eternal fate of the individual soul, the Evangelical party encouraged the common believers to seek for ‘evidence’ of their predestined salvation; Evangelical ministers preached about the radical evil of sin and emphasized obedience to God’s laws as revealed in Scripture or as summarized by the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The central activity of the Evangelical party was focused on their opposition to patronage, by which lay patrons, mainly the Crown or members of the gentry or aristocracy, were able to present qualified ministers to church livings within their gift.¹⁰ Arguing that patronage introduced an undue ‘respect for persons’ into Church life, Evangelicals insisted there was no justification for patronage either in the Bible or in the practice of the early Church. Instead, they insisted that the representatives of the parish congregation should have a right to select their minister. These two parties and their opposition over patronage would eventually lead to the break-up of the Church of Scotland at the great Disruption of 1843.

⁸ Brown, *Thomas Chalmers*, 44.

⁹ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰ Ibid., 47.

Although the Evangelicals' anti-patronage campaign had not been successful in the later eighteenth century, they entered the nineteenth century with a growing confidence and assertiveness. From 1810, their confidence found expression in a new journal, the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, which was edited by the able Evangelical and Calvinist minister, Andrew Thomson, minister of the prestigious St George's church in Edinburgh's new town. The Evangelical party's claim that the party truly inherited the spirit of the Reformation, represented doctrinal truth and moral rectitude, was greatly promoted by the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*.¹¹ The journal not only described the Church of Scotland as made up of 'two parties drawn up like hostile armies, for incessant warfare',¹² but it also regularly attacked the orthodoxy and honesty of the Moderates, which the Moderate party felt deeply, as their power steadily diminished in the Church courts. When the Moderates declared war on the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* in the General Assembly of 1820, one Evangelical opponent denounced the Moderates as 'silly drivellers' of whom 'there is no injustice and no mischief of which they are not capable'.¹³ Dr. James Bryce, a missionary in Calcutta and a member of Moderate party, responded by labelling the *Christian Instructor* the *Unchristian Instructor* and called on the Church to take action to curb its excesses.¹⁴

From 1820 to 1830, meanwhile, Scotland witnessed an increasing Evangelical influence. As the Established Church was revitalized under this influence, many Moderates began to share in the new vitality and the hostility between the two parties diminished.¹⁵ The established Church invested major new efforts in the 'home mission' as well as overseas missions, erecting new chapels-of-ease around Scotland and increasing the number and improving the quality of parish schools. By the early 1830s, Moderates and Evangelicals

¹¹ Chambers, 'Doctrinal attitudes in the Church of Scotland,' 160.

¹² 'Letters to a Student in Divinity on the Parties in the Church,' *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, 20 (1821), 73.

¹³ 'Proceedings of the General Assembly,' *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, 19 (1820), 406.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 408.

¹⁵ Brown, *Thomas Chalmers*, 211.

were co-operating in calls for the enhanced influence and authority of the national Church of Scotland.¹⁶

The challenges of the American War of Independence, the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic wars ‘called forth exponents of “practical religion” rather than deep searches after religious truth’, and the two parties shared the view that disputes over doctrinal or ethical standards might be dangerous in encouraging the lower social orders to cease showing respect to the established order in Church and state. Indeed, doctrinal disputes were to be avoided, at least in public eye.¹⁷

Under the influence of Romantic emphases on sentiment and a heart-felt religion of love, some thinkers within the Established Church and outside of it began to question the harsh doctrines of double predestination and limited atonement. They grew critical of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the subordinate standard of faith (subordinate to Scripture) within the Church of Scotland since 1643—which seemed to proclaim a God of wrath and justice, and to expect Christians to live in uncertainty as to whether they were among the saved or the reprobate. Some bold thinkers began to emphasize God’s love for humankind rather than God’s righteous wrath over human sin; they began conceiving of God as a loving father, who sought to reconcile all humanity within the divine family, and they sought a more personal, heart-felt relationship with God. Such ideas of God’s desire for universal salvation were dangerous to express, especially among Church of Scotland ministers who had taken an oath at their ordination to teach faithfully the doctrines of the Westminster Confession. None the less, some were becoming troubled in their consciences about whether all aspects of the Westminster Confession were true, or whether it was a human construction, which could err on crucial points. It is to this new theological mood that we now turn our attention.

¹⁶ Ibid., 212f.

¹⁷ Chambers, ‘Doctrinal attitudes in the Church of Scotland,’ 159f.

B. Deviation from the Traditional Theology

The early nineteenth-century group of thinkers developed their theological positions in a manner similar to the Marrow men. Although Thomas Erskine of Linlathen and John McLeod Campbell of Row were personal friends of Edward Irving¹⁸, it would be fair to say that the three men did not agree in all their theological ideas. However, they were in agreement about the idea of God's universal redemption, and this provided them with a common theological axis.

B.1. Thomas Erskine and God's Universal Love

Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788-1870) was born the son of a barrister and educated in Edinburgh. After studying law at the University in Edinburgh, Erskine practised law for a time, until his elder brother's unexpected sudden death caused him to resign his legal position at the age of 28, in order to manage the family estate at Linlathen House in Forfarshire. This gave him the leisure needed to explore Christian ideas for the rest of his life. He was an Episcopalian, though denominational differences meant little to him. As a layman he produced a number of works which expressed 'a profound dissatisfaction with the accepted theological orthodoxy of the day'.¹⁹ This godly and devout man, according to Hart, possessed 'one of the finest and most creative minds on the British theological scene in the early nineteenth century'; he pursued the nature and purpose of the Christian Gospel, exploring the Fatherly love of God through Christ and its co-relationship with the individual believer.²⁰ As an Episcopalian, he was not 'fettered by formal submission to the Westminster Confession of Faith, but was nevertheless completely faithful to the Nicene

¹⁸ Henderson, *The Religious Controversies of Scotland*, 111.

¹⁹ Trevor A Hart, *The Teaching Father: An Introduction to the Theology of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1993), 1.

²⁰ Ibid., 16.

Creed and the catholic theology of the Orthodox Church Fathers and of the great Reformers'.²¹

Erskine thought that the Fatherly love of God, which he viewed as transparent through Christ's incarnate life and the Cross, provided infinite grounds for a person's assurance of salvation, and that this love was given freely to each individual. Erskine did not have a concept of God as filled with wrath toward his creatures for failing to fulfil the covenant of works, and who restricted His filial love and forgiveness to the elect only. Rather he claimed that God had unlimited love for the whole of humanity and desired their redemption, a redemption he offered freely to all men and women. God certainly judges His creatures, but at the same time He has unlimited grace and infinitive love for them also. Erskine thus rejected the idea of limited atonement, which was widely accepted by his contemporaries.

Through the perfect obedience of the incarnate Son of God to the Father's purpose on the Cross, Erskine believed, Christ freely offered eternal life to every individual. God did not require anything from humanity for their salvation, for salvation already belonged to them; 'we cannot love God on the mere ground that He will not punish us. We must know that *He loves us*, and that He does so independently of all our ill desert, and will continue to do so until He has subdued our unlovingness.'²² Therefore, in Erskine's mind, sinners were not condemned for breaking God's covenants, but only for rejecting the gospel. God's free offer in the atonement became effective when one believed it and came into it.

God's love then does not flow through the channel of election, neither does the gift nor the atonement of Christ. Where then is election? It is here, that when this love was poured upon all, and this forgiveness sealed to all; and the power to believe it conferred upon all – and yet no man would believe it; when all loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil; when all with one consent began to make excuse; *then* the electing word came forth, saying "compel some to come in". And thus

²¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology; from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 263.

²² T. Erskine, 'a letter to Bishop, from 16, Charlotte Square, March 2, 1867' in *Some Further Letters* (London: Strahan, 1871), 34.

is creature condemned throughout, and God is glorified. And he who believes, believes because he has been compelled to come in. But the fault is man's alone.²³

Here we can see the separation of Christ's act of atonement from its effectiveness, with the latter, according to Erskine, depending entirely on the believer's acceptance of the former. Erskine perceived God's salvific will not only as unconditional, but also as universal, and this may have misled some of his readers into believing that Erskine advocated universal salvation regardless of the individual's faith in God.²⁴ For Erskine, the distinction between those who believe and those who do not believe lay between 'those who, learning of this prevenient love of God cast themselves upon it in grateful thanks, and those who choose to remain unhealed ... thereby remain lost in the death of sin'.²⁵ Therefore, Erskine understood God's purpose for human beings as not to test or judge their 'divinely sanctioned life', but to 'train up a creature for real participation in his own holy and blessed nature ... which can only be made by the co-operation of the creature's own personal will'.²⁶

In his later work, *The Brazen Serpent*, Erskine described Christ's salvific mission in terms of 'the true doctrine of the headship of Christ' rather than through the doctrine of Christ's substitution. Erskine believed in a substitutionary atonement, but he also thought that the prevailing accounts of substitutionary atonement contained much dangerous error.²⁷ As the head of the body cannot be substituted for feet or hand, and as the blood of bulls

²³ T. Erskine, [Campbell, Mrs.] *Extracts of Letters to a Christian friend, by a Lady with an introductory essay by Thomas Erskine* (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1830), lxix.

²⁴ Some scholars, including Thomas F Torrance and Peter K Stevenson, hold the opinion that Erskine had moved from universal pardon to universal salvation and believed that everybody would ultimately be saved irrespective of their faith. To support this view, Stevenson cites Erskine's letter to Miss Rachel Erskine on 2 January 1827 in *Letters*, I, 92, 'I trust that He who came to bruise the serpent's head will not cease his work of compassion until he has expelled the fatal poison from every individual of our race'.

²⁵ Hart, *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, 29; T. Erskine, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel in three essays* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1828), 42.

²⁶ T. Erskine, *The Doctrine of Election* (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1878), 168ff.

²⁷ To avoid the misinterpretation of Erskine's 'universalism' as meaning universal salvation irrespective of faith, Erskine's 'universalism' in this thesis will refer to his concept of universal pardon, not as the concept of the universal salvation without faith.

cannot be substituted for that of Christ (Num 35:33), Erskine explained, so the concept of ‘substitution’ was not appropriate to describe Christ’s act of salvation on the Cross.²⁸

The humanly devised doctrine of substitution has come in place of, and has cast out, the true doctrine of the headship of Christ, which is the large, and glorious, and true explanation of those passages of Scripture which are commonly interpreted as teaching substitution. Christ died for every man, as the head of every man, not by any fiction of law, not in a conventional way, but in reality as the head of the whole mass of the human nature, which although composed of many members, is *one thing – one body* – in every part of which the head is *truly* present... He was indeed the head of every man, and therefore when he died, he died for every man.²⁹

Leaving aside the question of Erskine’s understanding of Christ’s substitution, his conception of Christ’s headship drove him to an emphasis on universal redemption.

According to Hart, Erskine’s doctrinal understanding and its formation was based upon the exploration of the Scripture.³⁰ Hart has summarized Erskine’s theology as emphasising that ‘God is the one whose arms are always open to receive his errant and sinful creatures, he has taken responsibility for their sin, and invites them now to enjoy in exchange his freely given life’.³¹

B.2. John McLeod Campbell

According to Otto Pfleiderer, John McLeod Campbell and Thomas Erskine of Linlathen were two of the most significant theological writers in nineteenth-century Britain. Through their study of the Bible and their own theological reflections, Pfleiderer argued, they reconstructed a doctrine of salvation that was similar in a number of ways to that of Kant and

²⁸ T. Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1879), 40-43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 41ff.

³⁰ Hart, *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, 31-36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

Schleiermacher. Their work, he added, had converted the doctrine of salvation from a matter of ‘forensic externality to ethical inwardness and a truth of direct religious experience’.³²

About their initial contact, it is hard to say exactly when Erskine and McLeod Campbell met each other for the first time. According to McLeod Campbell, ‘I am unable to say to myself with confidence whether it was in 1827 or 1828 that dear [Alexander] Scott took me to him [Erskine], as to one who knew that love of God in which we were seeing eye to eye’. However, Donald Campbell thought it was probably in the spring of 1828 that the two men met first in Edinburgh.³³

Before McLeod Campbell met Erskine ‘eye to eye’ in the spring of 1828 – if we follow Donald’s chronology – McLeod Campbell had already read Erskine’s writing of *Remarks on the Internal Evidences* (1820). In a letter to his father dated 25 February 1826, McLeod Campbell reported that Erskine had the same opinion as McLeod Campbell himself concerning ‘the connection between the doctrines and the morality of the Gospel’, of which McLeod Campbell and his father had often talked before. McLeod Campbell felt that Erskine’s language was the same as his own, noting how Erskine said of the connection that ‘I don’t say, believe the one, but remember you must also do the other; but, believe the one, and because you believe the one do the other. Yea, examine your belief and you will find it the firmest basis upon which morality ever rested’.³⁴ McLeod Campbell esteemed Erskine’s idea highly since both men placed the hopes of morality exclusively on the merits of Christ.

The eldest son of the Revd Donald Campbell, minister of the united parish of Kilninver and Kilmelford, John McLeod Campbell had been brought up mainly by his father because his mother (Mary Campbell) had died when Campbell was less than five years old.³⁵

³² O. Pfleiderer, *The development of theology in Germany since Kant, and its progress in Great Britain since 1825* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1909), 382.

³³ Donald Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1877), I, 62.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁵ Some interpret Campbell’s teaching of ‘the Fatherly love of God’ as being derived from his early memory of his being brought up with his own father’s love alone.

After completing the divinity course at the University of Glasgow, Campbell had a long period (five years) of waiting before he was ordained as minister of the parish of Row (modern name as 'Rhu', reverting to the Gaelic spelling) in September 1825.

There is an interesting relationship between McLeod Campbell and Irving. A year before Irving was called to Hatton Garden in London, McLeod Campbell had been invited to take the ministry of the same church through the influence of Principal Baird of Edinburgh University. As Donald McLeod Campbell observed in his *Memorials* of his father, 'how different would have been the course of both lives, if Campbell had gone to London instead of Irving!'³⁶

McLeod Campbell was not a great theological innovator, and when he was preparing sermons he usually just read the Bible, often consulting commentaries only for linguistic purposes. His theological departure from the so-called 'Calvinistic federal theology' was derived from his recognition of a profound anxiety and lack of assurance among the members of his Row congregation. As he discerned that most cases of repentance came from the fear of God's wrath and punishment, instead of a purer motive – sincere love for God – McLeod Campbell started to teach the 'Assurance of Faith'.

I was gradually taught to see that so long as the individual is uncertain of being the subject of love to his God, and is still without any sure hold of his personal safety, in the prospect of eternity, it is in vain to attempt to induce him to serve God under the power of any purer motive than the desire to win God's love for himself, and so to secure his own happiness: consequently, however high the standard, correspondence with it may be sought under the influence of mingled selfishness, making every apparent success only a deeper deception. And thus I was gradually led to entertain the doctrine commonly expressed by the words, '*Assurance of Faith*', having first seen that the want of it precluded singleness of heart and eye in the service of God, and then having found in studying the Epistles to the first Christian Churches, that its existence, in those addressed, was *in them* taken for granted, and in every practical exhortation was presupposed. I accordingly began to urge on my people, that in order to their being free to serve God – in order to their being in a condition to act purely, under the influence of love to Him, and delight in what He is, their first step in religion would

³⁶ D. Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, I, 8.

require to be, *resting assured of his love in Christ to them as individuals*, and of their individually having eternal life given to them in Christ.³⁷

Until they recognised themselves as the subjects of God's love and eternal security, McLeod Campbell thought, it would be difficult for individuals to experience a confirmation of God's love and happiness in Christ. Hence he proclaimed the assurance of God's grace to the members of his congregation, and hoped that this would bring them 'under the natural power of the love, the forgiving, redeeming love which was set before them'.³⁸ The assurance of one's 'personal safety in the prospect of eternity' could produce personal love for God, which would ultimately lead to true faith. If a person's assurance of salvation was based upon his or her perceived spirituality providing 'proof' of faith (which might be related to justification by works), this would not lead believers to real happiness in true faith, but only to despair.³⁹

The genuine assurance of God's love and grace could not be found in the doctrine of election, McLeod Campbell concluded, but in a universal atonement, through which every believer looks to the Cross where 'Christ had died *for all*' and hears the Gospel which 'announced Him as *the gift of God to every human being*, so there remained nothing to be done to give the individual a title to rejoice in Christ as his own Saviour'.⁴⁰

The doctrines necessary to the full display of THE TRUTH are, that love is an essential attribute in Godhead, and manifested to all his creatures; while hatred is a property of a sinful creature: in opposition to the false doctrine that God loves only a part of his creatures, and hates the remainder.⁴¹

In broad sense, the doctrine of universal atonement and pardon through the death of Christ, and also the emphasis on the believer's assurance, formed the essence of faith in McLeod Campbell's theological framework.

³⁷ J. McLeod Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections* (London: Macmillan, 1873), 18ff.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 135-144.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴¹ J. M. Campbell. *Two Sermons* (London: John Hatchard & Son, 1830), vi.

Even though there is quite a strong similarity in the ideas of Erskine and McLeod Campbell concerning universal atonement, it is generally accepted that they explored the Scriptures and reached their conclusions independently.⁴² Later McLeod Campbell recalled his first contacts with A. J. Scott and Erskine in connection with the doctrine of universal atonement, 'I met them both [Erskine and Scott] forty-three years ago [this would be 1828], about the same time, as the first who gave a full response to all that was in my heart of the joy in God through Jesus Christ; having before – each, and each separately – come to the same light of the divine love in which I was rejoicing'.⁴³

B.3. Alexander J. Scott

Alexander J. Scott, son of Dr John Scott – the Church of Scotland minister of Greenock's Middle Parish – was born in 1805, and studied theology at Glasgow Divinity Hall. Before he finished the course and was licensed to preach in the Church of Scotland by the presbytery of Paisley in September 1827, Scott attended some classes in Edinburgh University and served as tutor to a family that was close to Thomas Erskine.⁴⁴ Although brought up as a rigid high Calvinist, Scott came to oppose some aspects of Scottish traditional Calvinism, especially the doctrine of election.

When Erskine met Scott the first time, he was attracted to Scott 'in his youthful beauty – and with that rich endowment of mental power and spiritual understanding'.⁴⁵ For Erskine, Scott was 'in point of intellect, one of the first, if not the first, man that I have known';⁴⁶

⁴² O. Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, 378.

⁴³ McLeod Campbell's letter to his youngest daughter, 26th March, 1870 in D. Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, II, 273f.

⁴⁴ T. Erskine, *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1877), I, 130.

⁴⁵ T. Erskine, 'Letter to Mrs A. J. Scott 18 June 1866', in *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, II, 181ff.

⁴⁶ T. Erskine, 'Letter to his sister Mrs Stirling 14 Oct 1838', in *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, I, 331.

indeed, 'no man whom I have known has impressed me more than Scott'.⁴⁷ Scott and McLeod Campbell became acquainted with each other from September 1827, and McLeod Campbell was deeply impressed with Scott's preaching when he invited him to his pulpit in Rhu.

My [Campbell's] pulpit was occupied by my young friend Mr. Scott. I heard him with very peculiar delight. His preaching, though his second Sabbath, was with a sober, solemn composure, that would have seemed a delightful attainment in a man of much experience. The progress he has already made in the divine life, the elevation and clearness of his views, the spirit of love which he breathes in every word, and the single-eyed devotedness to his Master's glory, are to me most delightful illustrations of the power of simple faith.⁴⁸

There was great common agreement on the idea of universal atonement in the thinking of McLeod Campbell and Scott, and of Erskine also. Regarding their theological indebtedness to one another, we should look to the written testimony of McLeod Campbell:

That historical independence which we mark when two minds, working apart and without any interchange of thought, arrive at the same conclusions, is always an interesting and striking fact when it occurs; and it did occur to Scott and myself; and also as to Mr. Erskine and me, and I believe too, as to Mr. Erskine and Scott.⁴⁹

According to McLeod Campbell's testimony, the agreement among all three people on the doctrine of universal atonement came as a result of their independent thought. If we believe McLeod Campbell, there is no evidence that one of them had been taught the doctrine of universal atonement by the others; this suggests that there was a growing discomfort with the Calvinistic federal theological tradition at this time, even if it had not yet ripened into a movement. The theological alliance of three persons, Scott, Erskine, and McLeod Campbell, and their 'quite unique' three-way friendship was 'life-lasting',⁵⁰ and came to have momentous theological consequences after Edward Irving joined this group.

⁴⁷ T. Erskine, 'Letter to Rev. J. McLeod Campbell 17 June 1866', in *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, II, 181.

⁴⁸ Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 22.

⁴⁹ Robert H Story, 'A recent letter of Mr. Campbell's' in *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1862), 152.

⁵⁰ Erskine, *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, I, 129.

Later, from the autumn of 1828, Scott was deeply involved in Irving's London ministry at the National Scotch Church, Regent Square, as his assistant minister. Their heterodox theological views foreshadowed serious religious disturbances within the Church of Scotland.

B.4. Andrew Thomson's Universal Pardon Refuted

A brief consideration of Andrew Thomson's work will provide us with a typical contemporary view of the doctrine of universal atonement. Andrew Thomson (1779-1831), the minister of St. George's Church in Edinburgh and the first editor of *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, did not agree with Erskine's idea of universal pardon. In his *The Doctrine of Universal Pardon Considered and Refuted, in a Series of Sermons*, published in the middle of the Row controversy surrounding McLeod Campbell's teaching, Thomson argued that Erskine's thought on the unconditional freeness of the Gospel was based on the author's faulty reasoning, and on interpretations of Scripture which were 'perverse, and unsound and mischievous opinion'.⁵¹

A leader of the Evangelical party, Thomson acknowledged the great love of God, but insisted that this could not be applied to unbelievers since 'Christ's death does not take away the guilt of final unbelief'. According to Thomson, the expiatory death of Christ has not procured the actual pardon of all those iniquities that man has already committed or not yet committed. Even though a man has been justified by faith, he is still exposed to temptations, so he 'continually needs renewed forgiveness for renewed transgression'.⁵² Thomson emphasised 'plenteous redemption', based on the notion that 'God continues to pardon the sins which [man] continues to commit'. For Thomson, 'this plenteous redemption implies that provision is made for the entire restoration and perfect felicity of those for whom it is

⁵¹ Andrew M. Thomson, *The Doctrine of Universal Pardon Considered and Refuted, in a Series of Sermons: with Notes, Critical and Expository* (Edinburgh: W. Whyte, 1830), ix.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 28.

prepared'.⁵³ Thomson further noted that the doctrine of election was a stumbling-block to Erskine's efforts to understand Christ.

True, Christ is the *shepherd* of his *sheep*; but why did not Mr. Erskine add, that his sheep form a "little flock," and "hear his voice," and "follow" him, and that for *these sheep* the "good shepherd giveth his life?"⁵⁴

The greatest difference, however, between Thomson and Erskine lies in the assimilative connection between the doctrine of universal pardon and the doctrine of universal salvation. Erskine explored his idea in terms of the Fatherly love of God, which was transparent throughout Christ's incarnate life, providing all human beings with assurance of salvation, while Thomson thought this idea would logically lead to the doctrine of universal salvation.⁵⁵

There is not a syllable, declaring or implying that every sinner, or that all men are actual partakers of its pardoning virtue ... Christ during his life had a power given him that was adequate to the healing of all the sick throughout the land. But all were not, therefore, healed – those only were healed on whom he chose to put forth his miraculous strength, and who came to him or were brought to him in the exercise of faith. And in like manner the death of Christ having in it such a worth as is equal to cancel all the guilt that ever was or ever will be committed by the human race, and possessing this worth by the constitution of grace which appointed it as essential to the expiation of sin, as well as from the inherent, infinite dignity of the Saviour, does not therefore imply that all the transgressions of all men have actually been washed away by it.⁵⁶

It was the conflict between the doctrine of predestination (derived from that of limited atonement) and that of universal atonement. Andrew Thomson simply could not accept the idea of universal atonement. Although neither Erskine nor Thomson held the idea of universal salvation, Thomson's fear that Erskine's idea of universal pardon would eventually lead to the notion of universal salvation brought him to oppose Erskine's idea of universal pardon; 'if the principle of universal pardon', Thomson wrote, 'is such as to establish the

⁵³ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 389.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 88.

principle of universal salvation, or necessarily to infer it, and if you are satisfied that the principle of universal salvation is false and inadmissible, then you cannot possibly or consistently adopt the principle of universal pardon. This is self-evident and needs no illustration'.⁵⁷ By and large Thomson typified the attitude toward the theological dissidents by the mainstream Scottish religious group.

B.5. Biblicism versus Authority of Church

Irving's spirit of bringing a 'religion of the heart' by the Scripture – this can be called 'Irving's Biblicism' – was shared by his theological friends, especially McLeod Campbell. According to Don Chambers, the real doctrinal bombshell from McLeod Campbell was his insistence that 'the Bible was a superior authority to the Westminster Confession' and his claim of 'Reformation support for this conviction'.⁵⁸ In his speech before the bar of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr in 1831, McLeod Campbell would strongly maintain that his teachings were based on Scripture and that no Confessional statement could be taken over the Word of God;

If you show me that anything I have taught is inconsistent with the Word of God, I shall give it up, and allow you to regard it as a heresy ... if a Confession of Faith were something to stint or stop the Church's growth in light and knowledge, and to say, 'Thus far shalt thou go and no further', then a Confession of Faith would be the greatest curse that ever befell a church. Therefore, I distinctly hold that no minister treats the Confession of Faith right if he does not come with it, as a party, to the Word of God, and consent to stand or fall by the Word of God, and to acknowledge no other tribunal in matters of heresy than the Word of God. In matters of doctrine no lower authority can be recognized than that of God.⁵⁹

McLeod Campbell would argue that his teaching of universal atonement was drawn from the Scriptural teaching that 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten

⁵⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁸ Chambers, 'Doctrinal attitudes in the Church of Scotland,' 164.

⁵⁹ Campbell's speech before the bar of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr; cited in John Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century*, 152.

Son, that whoever believeth on Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life'. He quoted the Confession of Faith of the English congregation in Geneva, which was 'received and approved of by the Church of Scotland at the time of the Reformation' and which held 'that the reason why the Scriptures were put into the hands of all people was because they were the ultimate appeal in all cases of doubt'.⁶⁰

While McLeod Campbell appealed to the final authority the Scripture, most of his contemporaries thought that such a challenge to the 'Standards' of the Establishment would prove a threat to national religion.⁶¹ The speech of Dr. Barr in the General Assembly of May 1831 on 'the Row Case' reflected the typical stance on this issue:

If our standards were designed to answer any purpose, it was the purpose of securing uniformity of teaching. The peace and prosperity, nay, the very existence of our church, depends on the firmness and success with which she vindicates her authority and enforces her standards. There are not times when she may safely permit herself to be rent and weakened by internal divisions. She possesses the advantage of being firmly seated in the hearts of the people of Scotland, and so long as she enjoys their confidence and attachment she has nothing to fear.⁶²

The Rev. Robert Story of Roseneath, speaking in the General Assembly in support of McLeod Campbell's teachings, said he would renounce the Westminster Confession if it taught contrary to the gospel. The idea that God hates his creatures, Story insisted, could not be found in the Scriptures. But he also insisted that McLeod Campbell's view on universal atonement was contrary neither to the Bible nor to the Standards.

The libel accuses Mr. Campbell of teaching doctrines contrary to the Scriptures and to the Standards ... The fundamental question is, does God hate or love his creatures. A reverend father, well qualified to speak on this subject, alluded to the subject of reprobation. Is this decisive of God hating his creatures? If so, then I hesitate not to say, that I would renounce the Standards as contrary to the gospel. I say that it is contrary to all natural religion, to say that the infinite mind hates any of its creatures. The question is, has God expressed his love to all his creatures? Is there a man, woman, or child to whom God has not exhibited some kindness? ... But is there any man, woman, or child, that has no connexion with Christ? Is there any one that has *merited* kindness from God? The only channel, then, through which such kindness could flow, is

⁶⁰ *The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal*, vol.1 (1831), 117, 119.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, 111-128.

⁶² *Ibid.*, vol.1, 127.

through Christ ... it must be seen, therefore, that in the explanation given of what Mr. Campbell teaches, I hold that there is nothing contrary to the principles I have laid down, or to the Confession of Faith, which I am ready to declare to be the confession of my faith; for in it you have certainly no contradiction of these principles.⁶³

The tension between the Westminster Confession and Scripture was also revealed in the case of the Rev. William Dow of Tongland in Kirkcudbright, who confessed that ‘he had sinned in subscribing the Confession of Faith, since the guidance of the Bible and the Holy Spirit must alone be the clergyman’s authorities’.⁶⁴

I am held to have declared that the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland does embrace and set forth the whole of the truth of God ... I content myself therewith as the limit of illumination in the things of God, with no endeavour or purpose to reach forward, or to perfect myself in knowing the love of Christ ... I bind myself to adhere to it, to the neglect or refusal of all that may lie beyond; and moreover, do deceive it as the canon of truth, by which I am to interpret all Scriptures.⁶⁵

Dow wanted to deny every human word that could be in conflict with God’s word, and claimed to follow only Christ’s voice because no human obligation can supersede the true knowledge of God.⁶⁶ In the General Assembly of 1832, John McClellan, speaking on behalf of Kirkcudbright Presbytery, vigorously opposed Dow’s claim that apostolic miraculous workings were not locked away in their biblical vault, and that the Holy Spirit was still working in the nineteenth century just as in apostolic times. Responding to McClellan, Dow appealed to ‘the personal revelation aided by Holy Spirit’. McClellan responded that God revealed himself and his will to the Church, and that God’s direct revelation had long since ceased according to the Confession.⁶⁷

⁶³ *The Whole Proceedings before the Presbytery of Dumbarton, and Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, in the Case of the Rev. John McLeod Campbell, Minister of Row, Including the Libel, Answers to the Libel, Evidence, and Speeches* (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1831), xxx-xxxii.

⁶⁴ Chambers, ‘Doctrinal attitudes in the Church of Scotland,’ 168.

⁶⁵ *The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal*, vol. 2 (1832), 424.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 425.

⁶⁷ John McClellan, *Speech Delivered at the Bar of the General Assembly in the Case of the Rev. William Dow: With Considerable Additions, and an Appendix Containing the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Presbytery of Kirkcudbright, and the Judgement of the Assembly, in That Case* (Edinburgh: William Whyte and Co., 1832), 8-12.

Like the theological dissidents of that time, Irving wanted to place final authority in religious matters on the Scriptures; and this claim that theological ideas must be derived from Scripture continued throughout his life. It included his belief in the spiritual gifts, and his apocalyptic views expressed during the Albury Park conferences.⁶⁸ For Irving the Bible was God's direct revelation and thus to be venerated above all other authorities.⁶⁹ Irving's extreme position on the Scriptures – 'Obey the Scriptures or you perish' – shows us that his primary reference was always to God's word.⁷⁰ Margaret Oliphant described Irving's Biblicism as a passion to explore the word of God: 'His Bible was not to him the foundation from which theology was to be proved, but a Divine word, instinct with meaning never to be exhausted, and from which light and guidance not vague, but particular – could be brought for every need'.⁷¹ Although some of his claims were seen as a deviation from orthodox standards by his contemporaries, Irving held them in his heart with a passionate conviction that they were rooted in God's revealed word.

C. Irving's Idea of Universal Atonement

C.1. Irving's Involvement

Irving became involved with this group of theological dissidents through his encounter with McLeod Campbell. In 1828, when Campbell travelled to Edinburgh to meet Thomas Chalmers and Edward Irving, he already held the doctrine of universal atonement. Erskine, moreover, believed in universal atonement and had published *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*, while Scott also shared a belief in the doctrine.

⁶⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 393. 'No appeal was allowed but to the Scriptures, of which the originals lay before us'.

⁶⁹ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 63.

⁷¹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 223.

The pardon of the gospel then, is in effect a declaration on the part of God, to every individual sinner in the whole world, that his holy compassion embraces him, and that the blood of Jesus Christ has atoned for his sins. This is the declaration of God, and he makes it the ground of his urgent invitation to sinners to return to him and walk with him ... God so loved the world, (the whole world – all the race of Adam,) as to give his only begotten Son for them; - but those only who believe this love, who receive it into their hearts, are saved by it.⁷²

McLeod Campbell's thought had moved from 'the *nature* of faith' (the focus of his theological reflections in 1827), to an emphasis on 'the subject of faith, – namely, Christ's death for all men, forgiveness in Christ for all men', or, in short, universal atonement during 1828 and 1829.⁷³ He believed that the sins of all were already pardoned and that God had been reconciled to all men through Christ.

As to the extent of the atonement; I hold and teach that Christ died for all men – that the propitiation which he made for sin, was for all the sins of all mankind – that those for whom he gave himself an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savour, were the children of men without exception and without distinction.⁷⁴

At this time, Irving was gaining great popularity through his ministry in the Caledonian Chapel in Hatton Garden, London, and his congregation had built the Regent Square Church just one year before. Theologically, Irving insisted upon Christ's true humanity in soteriological terms, and this provided some theological arguments which he published in *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*. He also indulged in some prophetic works, and he translated the Spanish scholar Ben Ezra's eschatological writing and published it under the title, *The Coming of Messiah in Glory*, with his own lengthy preface, in which he portrayed the individual's repentance from worldly sin as a return to the true gospel, with the hopeful message of the Second Advent.

⁷² Erskine, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*, 42.

⁷³ Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 27.

⁷⁴ *The whole proceedings before the Presbytery of Dumbarton, and Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, in the case of the Rev. John McLeod Campbell, minister of Row, including the libel, answers to the libel, evidence, and speeches* (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1831), 16.

McLeod Campbell travelled to Glasgow in late 1827 to deliver a sermon to defend his theological positions at one of the Glasgow's charitable institutions, but the opposition to his ideas, which his opponents labelled 'Antinomianism', was steadily growing among his fellow ministers. McLeod Campbell observed that 'for many Sabbaths, most of the ministers in Glasgow were preaching with pointed reference to what I taught'.⁷⁵ Amid this theological turbulence over the teaching of Row, Irving arrived in Edinburgh from London to deliver a course of lectures on the Apocalypse, and the church where he spoke was crowded even at the unusual hour of six o'clock in the morning.

McLeod Campbell, who was acquainted with the leading Scottish minister of the day, Thomas Chalmers, also knew how much influence Irving wielded; both Chalmers and Irving could do much to support Campbell's ideas if they could be convinced to agree with him. It is not clear whether Campbell regarded one man more highly than the other when he travelled to Edinburgh. McLeod Campbell had probably read at least one of Irving's writings giving strong emphasis to Christ's earthly work, and he hoped that Irving might agree on some points with the doctrine of universal atonement.

McLeod Campbell's first meeting with Irving occurred in the drawing room of the house at Great King Street where Irving was staying. While a little child of the household played on the carpet, Irving warmly welcomed him, saying, 'God may have sent me instruction by your hands', and also, and turning to the child, saying 'He [God] might teach me by that child'.⁷⁶

I went to Edinburgh at that time to see Irving (and Dr. Chalmers also), in order to lay before them the conclusions at which I had arrived on the subject of Assurance of

⁷⁵ Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 21.

⁷⁶ Oliphant, *The Life of Irving*, II, 25; Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, I, 52ff. Later Campbell described this situation and explained that Irving's mention of God's teaching by the child did not hurt Campbell himself because Campbell knew Irving as 'his ideal was to put himself and others out of account, and exalt God alone.' While Mrs Oliphant described this scene as Campbell visited Irving 'to ask counsel and help in the midst of his hopes and difficulties', later Campbell insisted Oliphant's expression was wrong because his intention of visiting Chalmers and Irving was to persuade them of the correctness of his ideas which had created theological turbulence in ministerial society.

Faith and the practical experience as a minister with which my arriving at these conclusions was connected. I did *not* go to *consult* them as one having ‘difficulties.’ I went in the hope that the grounds of my own convictions would commend themselves to them; and this latter form of my hope seemed to be realized as to both; though I cannot say that there was anything as to either of them. But they both took the position of intending to weigh what I said; not – that which I had so much experience of them with other ministries – of deciding at once that I was wrong, and setting themselves – some kindly, some impatiently – to put me right.’⁷⁷

Through this meeting with McLeod Campbell, according to Oliphant, Irving found the doctrine of universal atonement added to his theological convictions. Irving’s open mind accepted the thought of the dissident preacher from Row; ‘it is evident that he entered into it heartily; and holding, as he himself held, that Christ’s work was one which redeemed not only individual souls but the nature of man, no one could be more ready than he to rejoice in the fullest unconditional proclamation that Christ died for all.’⁷⁸

Although Mrs Oliphant argued that Irving’s accepted the doctrine of universal atonement in his meeting with Campbell, Irving did not immediately start to preach on the doctrine; that came a month later, in June 1828. A few weeks after their meeting, Irving visited Row and preached in McLeod Campbell’s pulpit. During this same visit Irving met Alexander J. Scott, and they became friends. Irving discussed his new friends in a letter to his wife Isabella: ‘I was much delighted with Campbell and Sandy Scott [A. J. Scott], whom I have invited to come with you to London. I trust the Lord will deliver him out of his present deep waters’.⁷⁹ While in Row Irving also invited McLeod Campbell to preach in his church in London (the latter was about to travel to London to meet his sister who was arriving from India). In London, Campbell preached for Irving on at least three Sundays, 15, 22, and 29 June. During this visit, Campbell noted Irving’s actual acceptance of the doctrine of universal atonement.

⁷⁷ Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, I, 51ff.

⁷⁸ Oliphant, *The Life of Irving*, II, 26.

⁷⁹ Irving’s letter to his wife, from Collin’s shop, Glasgow, June 10 1828, in Oliphant, *The Life of Irving*, II, 27.

We are speaking of a sense of sin, and Irving said, "I do not know how it is, but I see that the Reformers had a far deeper sense of sin than we have." I replied that I believed it was because they had a deeper sense of the love of God as embracing the sinner, and as what the Atonement reveals. I do not know what more I said in expanding this ... Irving listened to me with that earnest weighing attention which was characteristic of him. He then got up and paced back and forward for a good while, during which I was silent. At last he stopped and said, "I believe you are right, and that you were sent to show me this." To what extent his system was then modified I do not know ... But from that time he preached the Atonement as for all, and the faith of the love manifested in it as the great power to awaken the deep sense of sin, as well as to quicken love to Him who first loved us.⁸⁰

We find further testimony of Irving's acceptance of universal atonement in a conversation he had with one of his friends, Mr. Paget of Leicester, about Christ's universal redemption and His lordship over the whole world.

He [Mr. Paget of Leicester] also, like Campbell and Erskine, sees Christ's death to be on account of the whole world, so as that he might be the Lord both of the election and the reprobation, and that it is the will of God to give eternal life by the Holy Ghost to whom it pleaseth Him. I first came to the conviction of that truth on that Saturday when, at Harrow, after breakfasting with a bishop and a vicar, I sat down to prepare a meal for my people. He thinks the Calvinistic scheme confines this matter by setting forth Christ as dying instead of, whereas there is no stead in the matter, but on account of, for the sake of, to bring about reconciliation. He also thinks that the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to us, is not the righteousness of the ten commandments, which He kept, and which is only a fleshly righteousness, but the righteousness into which He hath entered by the resurrection – that super-celestial glory whereof we now partake, being one with Him, and living a resurrection life. This I believe; and I take it to be a most important distinction indeed⁸¹

Irving was becoming increasingly estranged from the Calvinistic orthodoxy of the Church of Scotland, and this would not have been easy for Irving as a minister of that Church. There is some disagreement between the three texts concerning the timing of Irving's acceptance of universal atonement: while Mrs Oliphant claimed that Irving had accepted it during his meeting with McLeod Campbell, the latter insisted that Irving's conversion to the doctrine came a month later in June 1828 when he visited Irving's church in London, while Irving himself said his conversion came still later, during his conversation

⁸⁰ Donald Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, I, 53f.

⁸¹ Irving's letter to his wife Isabella, from Mornington Terrace, Hampstead Road, 4th August 1828, in Oliphant, *The Life of Irving*, II, 48.

with his friend in August 1828. It must have been difficult for Irving to leave the Scottish theological tradition into which he had been born, and which he had vowed to uphold at his ordination.

C.2. Irving's Position before Meeting with McLeod Campbell

Here we will briefly explore Irving's attitude concerning God's plan for the salvation of humanity. When we review Irving's writings prior to his meeting with Campbell in Edinburgh, we can understand his later agreement with Campbell's ideas. For example, when Irving had discussed the doctrine of election in his last sermon in the Caledonian Church, his views were already diverging from the position of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which formed the subordinate standard of faith within the Church of Scotland.

We began to perceive the doctrine of election in its manifestation of the separate people; though in its mystery of the eternal purpose of God we are but now beginning to be able to discourse it thereof, and you to hear it discoursed. By means of this doctrine, the Lord wrought a twofold effect: first, causing those to fall away from us who had no desire to prove the power of divine doctrine, and wanted only the entertainment of human discourse; secondly, uniting in more close communion those who loved His truth, and opened their ear to hear it ... how a spirit of prayer and waiting for God's blessing began by degrees to come over our spirit, with the conviction that unless He should take us by the hand and help us we should utterly come to nought ... But the Lord helped us, and continued to open more and more of His counsel, and to gather into the garner more and more of the fruits of righteousness.⁸²

While the Confession specified the doctrine of double predestination, which held that a portion of humanity were saved and the rest damned by God's will 'before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose' (*Westminster Confession*, Chapter III, Of God's Eternal Decree), Irving's sermon refers to the individual's free will to choose to accept God's grace by His help. According to the *Westminster Confession*, even God's chosen people are totally depraved and lack the capacity freely to

⁸² Irving, *Last Sermon in the Caledonian Church*, preached April 29, 1827, in *CW*, III, 506f.

choose His grace. In Irving's sermon the conflict between total depravity and free will seemed to give more weight to the former; however, as the sermon proceeded, freedom of will received increasing emphasis.

Irving's first published work of 1823, *For the Oracles of God, Four Orations and for the Judgement to Come*, reveals his attitude to this doctrine in his high hope of redeeming the whole world and God's 'longing anxiety for the recovery of all men'.⁸³ One of Irving's sermons preached during his first three years in London confirms his attitude regarding universal atonement. By Adam's disobedience and God's curse upon humanity, according to Irving, 'man has become sadly changed; the gold has become dim, and the fine gold changed. His understanding is darkened; his will rebellious against the will of God'. Then, the Saviour came to this world to break the bondage and 'to give deliverance to the captive', and his coming is called 'the redemption of mankind'.⁸⁴ Irving continued about God's redemptive work in the common believer's faith.

Now these Jesus hath brought again to life ... he hath set at liberty; and the will of God for our salvation he hath revealed, and hath restored to the breast of man that light that cometh from above. Either he dwelleth in you by faith, or else you hinder him from dwelling in you by want of faith, and by wicked works. But certainly he waiteth to be gracious: he standeth at the door of your hearts and knocketh; and if any man will open the door he will come in and sup with you.⁸⁵

In his expectation of Christ's coming again, Irving observed that Christ's universal reign might lead to the redemption of all God's creatures. Irving's Christ Jesus, who came into this world in the likeness of sinful flesh and was declared by God's own voice to take away the sin of the world, had the capacity to encompass every man in this world.⁸⁶

The resurrection declared him to be the Son of God with power; it proved him to be both Lord and Christ; but we do not yet see all things put under him; for he sitteth at the right hand of the Father till all his enemies be made his footstool...as the Son of

⁸³ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 28f.

⁸⁴ Irving, 'The Effect of the Curse upon Adam on his Posterity', in *Thirty Sermons*, 58, 67.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 68. Besides this sermon, Irving's idea of God's universal love to all humanity is revealed throughout *Thirty Sermons*.

⁸⁶ Irving, *The Temptation* [1823], in *CW*, II, 243.

man, he entered into any other reward than to be the Head of the present church, and to wait to be made the head of the heathen, and of the world, and of the blessed universe ... The second advent, or the bringing again of the Only-begotten into the world, is the realization of that glory.⁸⁷

Along with these writings, which confirmed Irving's support for the doctrine of universal atonement – or at least do not deny it – before 1828, Irving expressed his commitment to universal atonement in *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*. After delivering a series of sermons on the doctrine of the Trinity in 1825, Irving revised them for publication, and they appeared under the title *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses: The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Six Sermons* at the end of 1828. When Irving met Campbell in Edinburgh in May of 1828, he would have been working on this concluding part of the work, from which we may infer that their meeting in Edinburgh did not much affect Irving's writing on the Incarnation, and that Irving probably felt no serious conflict between his idea of the Incarnation and Campbell's views on universal atonement.

This unspeakable and inestimable work of Christ in the flesh for every man, as it is written, "That he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man;" and again, "Who is the Saviour of all man, especially of them that believe;" ... this ineffable benefit wrought for mankind; this redemption and resurrection of its estate, all done, all accomplished, and all freely presented unto the world through Christ.⁸⁸

C.3. Universal Redemption through Christ's Real Humanity

For Irving, Christ's unlimited love through His 'sinful nature' did not exclude any of His creatures. As Christ had humbled himself in the same flesh as His brethren, so the Saviour proclaimed the good news of salvation to everyone who could hear His message. It was each individual's responsibility whether or not to accept Christ's offer, and this would determine their own eternal state; 'wherever this is proclaimed rightly, men are brought under the

⁸⁷ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 164.

⁸⁸ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, in *CW*, V, 176.

penalty of having rejected, or under the benefit of having received God's Christ'.⁸⁹ As Erskine and McLeod Campbell had suggested 'universal pardon' (although the individual's 'eternal life' is wholly dependent on personal choice), so Irving also spoke of 'universal pardon' in similar terms in part II, 'The Universal Reconciliation wrought by His Death, and the Particular Election ministered by His Life in Glory'. Consequently, as a minister, Irving felt it was his duty to secure simple believers in their assurance of Christ's reconciliation of God and humankind and His redemption of humankind, in the same way as McLeod Campbell. So he insisted on the error of the doctrine of election:

To talk of conditional election, is the most egregious folly, the most entire rejection of Christ; the most wilful insurrection against the Father. First, to ask a condition over and above what is contained in Christ's work, is to disannul that work, and to say to the 'Father, Thy grace is not yet enough; I cannot trust Thee yet.'⁹⁰

Christ's work in His salvific mission for this world has been achieved perfectly once and for all in His 'sinful flesh', so the doctrine of conditional election would not just partly invalidate the Saviour's grace, but would annul the whole of it. The election of God's children, in Irving's mind, was a matter of personal choice, not of their being predestined by God 'before the foundation of the world was laid'. Therefore in the aspect of its practical application to an individual's faith, both doctrines – 'the commonness of the redemption and the personality of the election' – were necessary since they could only stand together; 'the former without the latter degenerates into universal salvation; the latter without the former degenerates into blind and absolute fate, partiality, or favouritism'.⁹¹ Where these two doctrines are held fast, according to Irving, the goodness, beauty, and solidity of the Divine purpose can revolve in these two doctrinal poles.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 180.

⁹¹ Ibid., 182.

The text in *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, especially Sermon III, has no conflicting points with the other sermons in the work. In addition to this, most of his writings before May 1828 show no serious conflict with McLeod Campbell's idea of universal atonement, and this consideration suggests that even though Irving had not expressed his position concerning the doctrine of universal atonement, he had shaped this idea long before his meeting with McLeod Campbell, probably from the start of his London ministry.

McLeod Campbell's influence on Irving could be interpreted as having stimulated Irving's public expression of his support for the doctrine of universal atonement. Later, Robert Norton described the Irving's resistance to the doctrine of the limited atonement, which was no less pronounced than that of Campbell:

He [Irving] also, along with Mr. Campbell, threw his whole soul into the preaching of the love of God for all men, and the consequent redemption of all by the blood of Christ. None but those who have been enchained in Calvinism, can adequately tell what an opening of prison doors and loosing of captives, was this preaching; for if the atonement be robbed of its universality, the prospect of heaven is wrapped in almost impenetrable gloom; and although told that if you love God, you may be sure that He loves you, how can the heart love an object of its dread?⁹²

In writing *An Apology for the Ancient Fulness and Purity of the Doctrine of the Kirk of Scotland*, Irving argued for unconditional grace, in terms of the cooperated works within the Trinity:

Where now are the men, who afterwards, when a lower view of the Gospel, as containing the law in its essence, instead of bringing it as a consequence, seized hold of that famous book, the Marrow of Modern Divinity, and took it up, when the General Assembly had cast it over their bar. There was a noble stand, which the Marrow Men, as they were called, made for the freedom of a preached Gospel; holding mainly that the Gospel was pure grace, free pardon, unclogged with any conditions; justification freely by the blood of Christ, at the will of the Father, out of his pure goodness originating, to the end of sanctification, and resurrection, and eternal glory, by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁹³

⁹² R. Norton, *The Restoration of the Apostles and Prophets in the Catholic Apostolic Church* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1861), 40ff.

⁹³ E. Irving, *An Apology for the Ancient Fulness and Purity of the Doctrine of the Kirk of Scotland* (London: James Nisbet, 1828), 29.

Regarding the pure grace of the Gospel, Irving maintained, any conditions for the believer should be removed because grace was proclaimed by the blood of Christ for all, and maintained by the Holy Ghost for all. Irving believed that this view of divine grace was in the tradition of those early eighteenth-century Scottish evangelicals who had supported the republication of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*.

Irving's published writings after his meeting with Campbell show his strong conviction of Christ's redemptive work for all humanity. The salvific value of the incarnation had permeated his writings with its effect on all human beings, proclaiming true redemption for all flesh.

Therefore I hold, that this great controversy which is now raging in this island and especially in Scotland, respecting the extent of the redemption, reconciliation, or atonement, is as truly a controversy for the being of God, as that which was waged by Elias at Mount Carmel,...If any man say God hath not love and grace to all men, so as to forgive them their sins, or that he hath not shewn this grace in giving his Son a ransom for all (I Tim. ii.6), then, I say that he denies the being of our God, and substitutes a creature of man's imagination; so that I feel as if the existence of Scotland as a nation, and of the Church of Scotland as a church, did depend upon the great question now at issue, whether God shewed love to all men, equal and alike, and wrought a true redemption for all flesh equal and alike out of sin and death, by the death of his Son.⁹⁴

Since all creation is sinful, by taking the same sinful flesh as the rest of humankind, the Son of God, for Irving, had showed the way to recover all creation and restore it to God. In Irving's point of view, Christ's taking fallen nature was the key point which defined Christ's identity as our Saviour and His redemptive work for all who share the same nature.

All which is a dead letter, a fiction, a folly, if so be that his creature nature was not part and parcel of the fallen and rebellious creation, in reconciling which he reconciled all ... All creation is sinful, being in a state of alienation from God: it has one law in it, the law of sin; and through all its parts this law binds it in one great sinful operation. The Person of the Son of God was born into it; he restrained, withstood, overcame this

⁹⁴ E. Irving, *Exposition and Sermon* (London: W Harding, 1833), 1226.

co-operation of a sinful creation, conquered the conqueror, and won it back to God; obtained power over all flesh.⁹⁵

Like Erskine and McLeod Campbell, Irving proclaimed the universal effect of Christ's death on the Cross for the redemption of all humanity. Once they had declared their positions, the theological support of the three men for each other was resolute throughout their lives. However, their theological positions did not have same foundation: while Erskine and McLeod Campbell had insisted on the individual's assurance of faith based on Christ's unlimited love, Irving claimed that Christ's willingness to take on 'sinful flesh' provided the basis of the assurance of faith, in that by sharing fully in the nature of humanity Christ became the Redeemer for all His brethren, with the continuing support of the Holy Spirit, and so became the model of faith by His perfect moral obedience.

However, since Irving's idea of universal atonement was based on Christ's true humanity, it forecast his apocalyptic vision.

That the universal reconciliation which Christ's death hath wrought, and the universal restoration unto life which His resurrection hath wrought, instead of being the support of universal salvation, is the support of universal right and lordship over all the creatures, which for the present doth constitute the world in Him to stand, and for Him obligated unto the Father; and hereafter shall constitute the world in two estates of eternal and infallible blessedness, or eternal and unchangeable misery – the one in virtue of His lordship honoured, the other in virtue of His lordship dishonoured; the one vessels unto honour, the other vessels unto dishonour.⁹⁶

For Irving, because God had assumed the same humanity in Christ as His creatures and humiliated himself to the point of death, He had shown that His abundant love had unlimited boundaries and was sufficient to embrace all human beings. However, even though God opened the redemptive door to all of his friends in 'sinful flesh', someone would reject it, standing on the side of 'His lordship dishonoured'. Irving's anger against those who refused

⁹⁵ E. Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature* (London: Baldwin and Craddock, 1830), viii – x.

⁹⁶ E. Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, in *CW*, V, 178f.

God's unlimited offer of His love drove him to warn them 'Christ's come in flesh' for the final Judgement. In Irving's eschatological thought, the wrath of God on these heathen people was imminent. With his understanding of universal redemption through Christ's real humanity, Irving proceeded to develop his idea of *Parousia*, enhanced by his historical understanding of European turmoil, which I will explore in the last part of this thesis.

D. Conclusion

We have explored the theological context in early nineteenth-century Scotland, in order to provide a clearer grasp of Irving's developing idea of Christ's genuine humanity. The theological consensus about the doctrine of universal atonement that developed among Irving and his friends would in time have an immense impact on subsequent doctrinal developments in modern Britain. Against the strict doctrine of limited atonement enshrined in the Westminster Confession, a group of Christian thinkers began proclaiming God's indiscriminative love for all who accepted a personal relationship with Christ through faith. These individual thinkers did not all share the same approach. In understanding of Christ's universal atonement, Thomas Erskine stressed God's filial love and McLeod Campbell emphasised the individual's assurance of salvation through God's saving plan, while Irving developed his idea of Christ's genuine humanity.

When McLeod Campbell visited Irving to discuss the idea of universal atonement in May 1828, Irving experienced this teaching for the first time. We might have expected Irving to experience a deep and prolonged conflict between the Calvinistic doctrines that had shaped the Church of Scotland since the Reformation and that he had promised to teach at his ordination, and the new doctrine of God's filial love for humankind and the theological inferences emerging from his idea of Christ's sinful flesh. But his inner struggle did not last

long, and just three months later he confirmed his conviction in the new views, a conviction that would remain with him for the rest of his life.⁹⁷

While McLeod Campbell underscored the assurance of salvation as a central teaching in the Christian Gospel, Irving sought to demonstrate that the Saviour shared the same human condition with all humankind, and that as God gave His Spirit to Christ, so He also gave His Spirit to humankind. For McLeod Campbell, Christ represented the abundant love of God, a love that brought atonement for all humanity and provided internal evidence of God's love for each individual. Erskine re-evaluated the Fatherly love of God and transformed it into a fundamental grounding for the Christian faith, while Irving also acknowledged God's great love for common believers through the actions of the Trinity. However, Irving's idea of Christ's sinful flesh brought all humanity to an elevated state of brotherhood with Christ, who interceded for common believers before God, and brought hope for their eternal relationship with God.

In truth, Irving had never been satisfied with the doctrine of double predestination. From the early years of his ministry, Irving struggled to comprehend God's great salvation plan for all humanity. In the context of Row heresy, Irving's friendship with McLeod Campbell worked as a catalyst to clarify his conviction about the doctrine of universal atonement. But as we observed this conviction was strongly connected to and supported by his idea of Christ's real humanity; in this, Irving's doctrinal development diverged from that of his friends.

⁹⁷ *PW*, I, 118, 189, 706.

Chapter III. The Will of the Godhead as Expressed through Christ's Humanity

Introduction

Shortly after settling in London, Irving became convinced that his church doctrines needed to be rooted in the earliest period of Christian history, and that the doctrine of the Incarnation was the focal subject that would bring all theological concerns back to their origin. Since he regarded Christology as the foundation of all theology, Irving thought the teachings of the Incarnation would be 'strong medicine for a dying Church'.¹ His position was homiletic rather than doctrinal; however, it contained strong theological implications.

His ideas of the person of Christ attracted attention after Henry Cole published his arguments questioning the orthodoxy of Irving's views, which triggered doctrinal debates not only in London but also in Scotland. This controversy would continue until Irving was deposed from the Church of Scotland ministry by the Presbytery of Annan.

Many previous authors have explored Irving's controversial theological views, but few have considered the sources of Irving's distinctive views on the person of Christ, and none has adequately revealed the origins of his Christology. This needs more scholarly attention.

In the first part of this chapter I will explore the sources of Irving's view of the person of Christ. Irving rarely mentioned the influences for his ideas on the person of Christ, though the teachings received during his boyhood and his later social contacts can provide us with some clues. I will focus on the origin and development of Irving's Christology until the time of Henry Cole's visit, an event which launched the controversy not only within the established Church of Scotland but also within the larger British religious world. In the later part of this chapter, I will describe several distinctive characteristics of his doctrine of the

¹ *Trial of Mr. Edward Irving, Late Minister of the National Scotch Church, Regent Square, London; Before the Presbytery of Annan, on 13th March, 1833; with an Appendix* (Dumfries: Journal Office, 1833), 32.

person of Christ, and reflect on its broader significance, along with Irving's friend's acceptance of this teaching.

A. The Origin of Irving's Christology

A.1. Early Time in London

On the second Sabbath of July 1822, Irving began his ministry in London.² Before his arrival, the Caledonian Chapel in Cross Street, Hatton Garden, had been expecting someone who would inspire the metropolis with the spirit of Scottish Christianity. With its financial troubles and strict trust deed which demanded a Gaelic-speaking minister, the Caledonian Chapel had had a year's ministerial vacancy prior to Irving's acceptance of the position.³ The small congregation – numbering only about fifty – had managed to relax its requirement that its minister should conduct services in Gaelic, and it was now glad to appoint Dr Chalmers' assistant as their minister. After being ordained by the Presbytery of Annan, Irving crossed the River Tweed and travelled to London. His inaugural sermon was based on Acts 10: 29: 'Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?'⁴ He soon achieved an 'unprecedented popularity' among London's religious public.

A.1.a. Settlement and Fame

² Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 150. About a month later, Irving was formally 'introduced' to his congregation by Chalmers, according to custom.

³ J.C.S. Brough, *The Centenary of Regent Square 1827-1927* (London, 1927), 10.

⁴ Unfortunately, this first sermon at the Caledonian Chapel has not been preserved. Instead his early sermons, preached during the first three years of Irving's residence in London, can be found in *Thirty Sermons*, taken down in shorthand by Mr. T. Oxford (London: John Bennett, 1835).

Jane Welsh, who had been in a romantic relationship with Irving, provided a sardonic depiction of Irving's early ministry in Hatton Garden in a letter to Miss Eliza Stodart: 'Mr. Irving is making a horrible noise in London, where he has got a church. He tells me, in his last, that his head is quite turned with the admiration he has received; and really I believe him'.⁵ Irving's delight in his own ministry was conveyed in his letter to Mr Graham of Burnswark, one of Irving's friends, in which he described his settlement in London;

You cannot conceive how happy I am in the possession of my own thoughts, in the liberty of my own conduct, and in the favour of the Lord. The people have received me with open arms; the church is already regularly filled; my preaching, though of the average of an hour and a quarter, listened to with the most serious attention. My mind plentifully endowed with thought and feeling – my life ordered, as God enables me after his holy Word – my store supplied out of His abundant liberality. These are the elements of my happiness, for which I am bound to render unmeasured thanks ... Here there are no limitations to my mind's highest powers; here, whatever schemes are worthy may have audience and examination; here, self-denial may have her perfect work in midst of pleasures, follies, and thriftless employments of one's time and energies.⁶

If we can describe Irving in Glasgow as an 'eagle in a cage', whose strength had been imprisoned, then, according to George Gilfillan, in London he found himself free to fly; 'it was a flight promoted by enthusiasm, sustained by sympathy, accelerated by ambition, and consecrated by Christian earnestness'.⁷ Irving was now able to deliver his own and distinct style of sermon, and his eloquent and powerful rhetoric attracted many people to hear his sermons in Hatton Garden.

Before long Irving found his church was full of crowds wanting to hear his sermons; 'By gradual degrees the little chapel began to fill'.⁸ His 'new method of preaching' thronged the Caledonian Chapel with hearers, including statesmen, philosophers, poets, painters and literary men. Among them was George Canning (1770-1827), a politician and orator who

⁵ Jane Welsh Carlyle, a letter to Miss Eliza Stodart, 3 March [1822] in *Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1889), 58.

⁶ Irving, 'A letter to Mr Graham, of Burnswark, 5 August, 1822', in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 152f.

⁷ George Gilfillan, 'Edward Irving', in *The Treasury of Modern Biography: A Gallery of Literary Sketches of Eminent Men and Women of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Robert Cochrane (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1881), 283.

⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 151.

became Prime Minister in 1827; he famously proclaimed in the House of Commons that in Irving he had found the most eloquent preacher he had ever heard. Not long after, on most Sunday mornings, more than thirty-five carriages with coronets arrived at Caledonian Chapel and the line of carriages often extended to Holborn.⁹ Almost all seats were occupied an hour before the service, admission was by ticket, 'ladies were glad to sit on the pulpit stairs, and every available inch of standing-room was occupied in a building seating six hundred'.¹⁰ William Hazlitt gave us a first-hand account: 'People go to hear in crowds, and come away with a mixture of delight and astonishment – they go again to see if the effect will continue, and send others to try to find out the mystery'.¹¹ Irving gave them a heady combination of theology and dramatic rhetoric, keeping 'the public in awe by insulting all their favourite idols'.¹²

When Irving arrived in London, he brought 'the idea of doing a special work for God by a new mode of preaching'.¹³ When Chalmers visited London in the same year, he found that Irving was 'happy and free, and withal making his way to good acceptance and a very good congregation', but Chalmers was also concerned that Irving's rather eccentric propensity and sudden popularity could do harm: 'I hope he will not hurt his usefulness by any kind of eccentricity or imprudence'.¹⁴ However, concerning Irving's flamboyant impact in his early period in London, R. H. Story observed that 'no man exercised a more powerful influence upon the great city than did the Scottish preacher'.¹⁵

⁹ Brough, *The Centenary of Regent Square 1827-1927*, 10. According to James A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, A History of the First Forty Years of his Life*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1882), I, 156: 'Among frequent or occasional attenders [at Irving's services] were prominent men like George Canning, Thomas Carlyle, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Brougham, Lord Liverpool, Sir James Graham, Sir James Mackintosh, Zachary Macaulay (father of the historian), Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt and others'.

¹⁰ A. L. Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle* (London: James Clarke, 1937), 49.

¹¹ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (London: Colburn, 1825), 83.

¹² *Ibid.*, 91.

¹³ John Hair, *Regent Square, Eighty Years of a London Congregation* (London: J. Nisbet, 1898), 43.

¹⁴ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 155f.

¹⁵ Story, ed., *The Church of Scotland*, V, 771.

A.1.b. First Publication: *For the Oracles of God; Judgement to Come*

The second year of Irving's London ministry opened with the publication of his first book, *For the Oracles of God, Four Orations, and For the Judgement to Come, An Argument in Nine Parts*, which was partly based on his preached sermons. The work was the product of 'more than ten years' meditation upon the subject', and Irving wanted to reach as many readers as possible; 'in this Christian country there are, perhaps, nine tenths of every class who know nothing at all about the applications and advantages of the single truths of revelation, or of revelation taken as a whole; and what they do not know they cannot be expected to reverence or obey'.¹⁶ In *For the Oracles of God*, dedicated to Chalmers, Irving pointed to people's neglect of the word of God, emphasizing a need to return to it, through Christ.

The miracles of God have ceased, and Nature, secure and unmolested, is no longer called on for testimonies to her Creator's voice. No burning bush draws the footsteps to his presence chamber; no invisible voice holds the ear awake; no hand cometh forth from the obscure to write his purpose in letters of flame. The vision is shut up, and the testimony is sealed, and the word of the Lord is ended, and this solitary volume, with its chapters and verses, is the sum total of all for which the chariot of heaven made so many visits to the earth, and the Son of God himself tabernacles and dwelt among us.¹⁷

In Irving's first publication we notice a strong Biblicism.¹⁸ From the beginning of his second year in London, he had preached on the nature of the Christian life, urging his hearers to adhere to the word of God in all aspects of their lives. He was concerned about the prevalent bibliolatry of the times, which emphasised the letter rather than the spirit of Scripture, and he insisted that the Bible must be considered as the voice of the Spirit, through which believers could know the will of God. Against a dull catechism, Irving called men

¹⁶ Irving, *For the Oracles of God, Four Orations and for the Judgement to Come*, v.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3f.

¹⁸ The traditional Biblicism was one of the characteristics of the nineteenth-century Evangelicalism. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 12; David Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism,' in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*, ed. David Fergusson (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 236.

back to the spirit of Scripture.¹⁹ He lamented the ‘apostasy’ of his age, by which some degraded the Word of God into mere fiction, and he called for religion of the heart;

Why, in modern times, do we not take from the Word that sublimity of design and gigantic strength of purpose which made all things bend before the saints, whose praise is in the Word and the church of God? Why have the written secrets of the Eternal become less moving than the fictions of fancy, or the periodical works of idle literature; and their impressiveness died away into the imbecility of a tale that hath been often told? Not because man’s spirit hath become more weak ... Not because the Spirit of God hath become backward in his help, or the Word divested of its truth; but because we treat it not as the all-accomplished wisdom of God – the righteous setting works of men along side of it, or masters over it – the world altogether apostatizing from it unto folly.²⁰

For Irving, who had once dreamed of being a missionary to Persia, London could now be regarded as his missionary territory. Possessing an ancestral Presbyterianism, Irving ‘left his native land, and came to foreign parts’.²¹ Brought up in the Covenanting tradition, Irving had a passionate loyalty to his nation, Scotland, and he devoted a large part of his ministerial labours to providing care for the Scots residing in London.²² Like many expatriates who miss their home, Irving regarded his native land as a model of Christianity.

It is a good custom inherited from the hallowed days of Scottish piety, and in our cottages still preserved, though in our cities generally given up, to preface the morning and evening worship of the family with a short invocation of blessing from the Lord. This is in unison with the practice and recommendation of pious men, never to open the divine Word without a silent invocation of the divine Spirit.²³

From Irving’s point of view, the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, with its historic roots in the Culdees, had retained an apostolic spirituality and primitive Christian purity rather more than its sister establishment, the Church of England. Although Irving had departed from Scotland, he ministered to the Church of Scotland in London, and he would express his Presbyterian identity in the building of his grand ‘London Kirk’. Moreover, ‘he had a divine

¹⁹ Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle*, 59.

²⁰ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 50.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xxi.

²² See, chapter I, A.1.e.

²³ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 17.

mission to re-establish practical Christianity'.²⁴ He denounced the widespread materialism of the city, which he believed arose from the new industrialism, 'Byronic poetry, Malthusian economics, Benthamite utilitarianism and all the "Babylonish" gods worshipped". No idol or sin escaped the prophetic lash of his denunciations'.²⁵

He makes war upon all arts and sciences, upon the faculties and nature of man, on his vices and his virtues, on all existing institutions, and all possible improvements, that nothing may be left but the Kirk of Scotland, and that he may be the head of it.²⁶

Irving reproached those who had no ear for God's word; 'to minds thus unturned to holiness the words of God find no entrance – strikingly heavy on the ear, seldom making way to the understanding – almost never to the heart'.²⁷ In order to avoid God's wrath and his judgement to come, which might lead us into 'the wretched abyss of spiritual and eternal death', we must go back to the word of God, which is the source of life, animating all spiritual action, claimed Irving:

To read the Word is, therefore, no ordinary duty, but the mother of all duty, enlightening the eyes and converting the soul, and creating that very conscience to which we would subject it. We take our meat not by duty – the body must go down to dust without it – therefore we preserve, because we love to be. So also the word of God is the bread of life, the spring of all spiritual action, without which the soul will go down – if not to instant annihilation – to the wretched abyss of spiritual and eternal death.²⁸

In the latter part of the work, *For Judgement to Come*, dedicated to his friend the Rev. Robert Gordon, a Church of Scotland minister in Edinburgh, Irving called on his readers to

²⁴ Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, A History of the First Forty Years of his Life*, I, 156. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Scottish missionaries revealed their identity as either 'Scottish' or 'British'. Even though these two identities had worked in complementary manner, rather than on competitive terms, it is also true that a Scottish Presbyterian identity was favoured by Scots missionaries. See, Esther Breitenbach, 'Empire, Religion and National Identity: Scottish Christian Imperialism in the 19th and early 20th century' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2005); John M MacKenzie, 'David Livingstone: the Construction of the Myth' in *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Culture in Modern Scotland*, ed. Graham Walker and Tom Gallagher (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 24-42.

²⁵ David Allen, 'Regent Square Revisited: Edward Irving--Precursor of the Pentecostal Movement,' *Evangel*, 22 (Aug. 2004), 75-80

²⁶ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (London: Colburn, 1825), 91.

²⁷ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

recognize that the divine revelation about ‘God’s coming judgement’ was not simply an invention of ‘poetical visionaries or religious rhapsodists’.²⁹ Rather, Irving called on, in the manner of John the Baptist, common believers to repent and cease their resistance to God and his grace. He proclaimed a prophetic message to his London listeners.³⁰

His native Scotland, according to Irving, had risen from a condition of chronic war, with ‘no philosophy, and no literature’ to become a nation with an abiding respect ‘for the cause of religion and liberty – for the rights of God and man’.³¹ One of Irving’s theological friends, F. D. Maurice, noticed that most of Irving’s ideas had been brought from his home, and were ‘in the John Knox School, part of his covenanting, Calvinistical culture’. Maurice revered what he heard from Irving as representing ‘Protestant theology in the highest, purest meaning of that word, and as the very ground of all theology’.³²

Irving also reproached the world for its ‘light, empty and profane ear’ that would bring apocalyptic wrath from God. From his point of view, the ‘new opportunity for new obedience’ by true repentance seemed ‘rare or never’.

Yes, he [God] endures it patiently – that is, he leaves you to yourselves, and does not cut you off with prompt and speedy vengeance. But he leaves you to yourselves; and every refusal hardens you a little more, and every resistance closes up another avenue of grace, and every postponement places further off the power of acceptance; and through God changeth not his mercy, we change our capacity of mercy –cooling more, and hardening more, till old age, with its lethargy and fixed habits, steals on apace, and feeble-mindedness, and sickness, which brings the routine of sick-bed attendance, but little repentance, or opportunity for new obedience, or space for trying the spirit we are of, – and death to such a penitent becomes a leap in the dark – but as such penitents are rare or never, death to such procrastinators rivets up the closing avenues of grace, and presents them to the judgment-seat, fixed, finished, and incurable!³³

The public response to Irving’s first publication was not favourable. As a preacher, who had gained an ‘almost unprecedented popularity’, Irving’s first publication drew

²⁹ Ibid., 105.

³⁰ In 1823, soon after Irving settled in London, he delivered a series of discourses on the Life of John the Baptist.

³¹ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 256.

³² Frederick D. Maurice, *The Doctrine of Sacrifice* (London: Macmillan, 1883), xiii – xv.

³³ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 583f.

considerable public attention and criticism.³⁴ Almost all the daily newspapers took an interest in this book, and *The Times* printed extracts daily from it. But the reviews on a whole were highly critical and occasionally even hostile. Thomas Carlyle, Irving's closest friend, shared in this criticism; 'Sometimes I burst right out laughing when reading it. At other times I admired it sincerely'. But his basic stance was that it was, 'on the whole decidedly a monster'.³⁵ The Scottish historical theologian, John Tulloch, who thought Irving a genius 'in some respects unrivalled among his contemporaries', wrote of Irving's *Oracles* that it had 'grandeur of imagination, richness of poetical and spiritual conception, and fullness of vivid feeling, rather than any glow of higher insight, penetrating to the deeper problems of religion'. But he also noted that the work failed 'in clear-sighted intelligence and definite or even suggestive development of ideas'.³⁶

A.1.c. Friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), the English Romantic poet and philosopher, was one of the greatest influences on Irving's thought. Although a radical republican in his youth, in his later life Coleridge was occupied with religious matters, and became a major force in British theology.³⁷ In his poetry, we can discern intense theological colours. For Coleridge, the natural world was perceived as an effluence from God.

Glory to Thee
Father of Earth and Heaven,

³⁴ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (London: Colburn, 1825), 83.

³⁵ Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, A History of the First Forty Years of his Life*, I, 188. 'There is strong talent in it, true eloquence and vigorous thought, but the foundation is rotten, and the building itself a kind monster in architecture, beautiful in parts, vast in dimensions, but on the whole decidedly a monster.'

³⁶ John Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans, 1885), 156. Tulloch's comment can be interpreted as the public attitude to Irving's *Oracles* of that time.

³⁷ James D. Boulger, *Coleridge as Religious Thinker* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1961), 1. In the case of F. D. Maurice, he regarded Coleridge highly as one of the invaluable sources in his book, *The Kingdom of Christ or Hints to a Quaker respecting the Principles, Constitution, and Ordinances of the Catholic Church in 2 Vols.* (London: Macmillan, 1883), xxv.

All-conscious Presence of the Universe,
Nature's vast ever-acting energy,
In Will, in Deed, impulse of All in All.³⁸

According to Robert Barth, 'much of Coleridge's religious thought is an attempt to reconcile the dynamic philosophy and the Christian faith'.³⁹ Influenced by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, Coleridge accepted the classical distinction between 'Reason' and 'Understanding'. Then he divided 'the Reason' itself into two; the speculative reason and the practical reason. The latter was ultimately, in Coleridge's thinking, regarded as faith.⁴⁰

Coleridge's speculative philosophy became the foundation of his theology.⁴¹ His path to Christian truth was to read the Bible – 'the written Letter' – to find evidence of 'Light' which he believed was higher than all.⁴² Religiously, he 'saw that the truth of universal brotherhood, and of the right of the meanest man to equal liberty, followed on and ought to be founded on the truth of God's universal Fatherhood'.⁴³ 'The quest for truth, and the vindication of the Christian faith as the only true philosophy', according to Basil Willey, 'formed the master-current of his life'.⁴⁴ The nineteenth-century Scottish historical theologian John Tulloch evaluated Coleridge's contribution of poetic and philosophic theology to the religious world as follows:

The religious teaching of Coleridge came upon his generation as a new breath, not merely or mainly because he revived these ancient principles, but because he vitalised anew their application to Christianity, so as to transform it from a mere creed, or collection of articles, into a living mode of thought, embracing all human activity.⁴⁵

³⁸ Stopford A. Brooke, *Theology in the English Poets: Cowper, Coleridge, Wordsworth & Burns* (London: J.M. Dent, 1910), 63.

³⁹ John Robert Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴¹ Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought*, 11.

⁴² Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, *Christian Theology Since 1600* (London: Duckworth, 1970), 87.

⁴³ Brooke, *Theology in the English Poets*, 55.

⁴⁴ Basil Willey, 'Coleridge and Religion' in *S.T. Coleridge*, ed. R.L. Brett (London: Bell, 1971), 221.

⁴⁵ Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought*, 12.

Under the influence of William Frend, a fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, the young Coleridge had embraced Unitarian ideas. Unitarianism appealed to many young radicals in the 1790s, with its simplicity in describing God as One and its rejection of the Trinity.⁴⁶ In his 'Prefatory Note' to *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge reveals that he became a Trinitarian while staying in the Lake District after returning from his visit to Germany in 1800.⁴⁷ But Robert Barth gives us a more detailed account of this: his Unitarianism was replaced by Trinitarianism in February 1805, during his sojourn in Malta, and his Trinitarianism came through the idea of the Logos. Coleridge thought that 'when the Logos was incarnate in the figure of Jesus, he was a "symbol" of his own perfect spiritual existence as "Idea"'.⁴⁸ His belief in the divinity of Christ could not be separated from Redemption; and Christ's divinity, for Coleridge, involved the Trinitarian idea within the unity of the Godhead. 'With a growing realization of evil and guilt and his own inadequacy in the face of them, Coleridge moved beyond Unitarianism to the redemptive strength of a more orthodox Christianity'.⁴⁹ He now believed that 'the Trinity is the only form in which an idea of God is possible, unless it be a Spinozistic or World-God.'⁵⁰ According to David Lee, Coleridge sought to 're-interpret the foundational doctrines of Christianity against critical and rational methods of his day by using experiential directions offered by Romantic philosophy'.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: Aids to Reflection and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36-40.

⁴⁷ Samuel T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection* (Liverpool: Howell, 1877), vii.

⁴⁸ David Pym, *The Religious Thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 70.

⁴⁹ Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, 9-12. Coleridge was not a Unitarian when he met Irving. Some argued that Irving's idea of the person of Christ was derived from Coleridge's Unitarian conviction. But as Coleridge was of a Trinitarian mind when he met Irving, this argument is not sustainable.

⁵⁰ Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge, 4 vols (London: W. Pickering, 1836-1839), III, 31 (Notes on Hooker, Ib. 2.p. 250).

⁵¹ David Yat Tong Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving' (PhD Thesis. Brunel University, 2003), 33.

Irving was introduced to Samuel Taylor Coleridge by Basil Montague, a Chancery barrister, in 1823, when Coleridge was completing the manuscript of *Aids to Reflection*. Like many other Londoners, Coleridge attended Irving's sermons.

I have been many times in town within the last 3 or 4 weeks; but with one exception when I was driven in and back by Mr Gillman to hear the present Idol of the World of Fashion, the Revd. Mr Irving, the super-Ciceronian, ultra-Demosthenic Pulpititeer of the Scotch Chapel in Cross Street, Hatton Garden.⁵²

The two men exchanged a considerable amount of ideas and news, including news of Scotland.⁵³ Their acquaintance lasted for several years, until Coleridge's death in July 1834, just five months before Irving's. Their friendship was 'full of kindness on the part of the philosopher, and of reverential respect on that of Irving'.⁵⁴ Irving became a 'warm admirer' of Coleridge.⁵⁵ According to Coleridge, Irving 'has a vigorous & (what is always pleasant) a growing mind: and his character is manly throughout', and was 'a mighty wrestler for truth'.⁵⁶

I hold withal that Edward Irving possesses more of the spirit and purposes of the first Reformers; that he has more of the head and heart, the life, the unction, and the genial power of Martin Luther than any man now alive yea, than any man of this and the last century. I see Edward Irving a minister of Christ after the order of Paul.⁵⁷

In a letter to his wife, Chalmers described Coleridge's influence over Irving: 'We spent three hours with the great Coleridge ... His conversation flowed in a mighty unremitting stream, is most astonishing, but I must confess, to me still unintelligible ... You know that Irving sits at his feet, and drinks in the inspiration of every syllable that falls from

⁵² Samuel T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 Vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971), vol. V, 280.

⁵³ Ibid., vol. V, 301.

⁵⁴ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 189.

⁵⁵ Bernard M. G. Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore, A Century of Religious Thought in Britain* (London: Longman, 1971), 409.

⁵⁶ Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. V, 474 [July 1825]; *Fraser's Magazine* (January, 1835), 4.

⁵⁷ Samuel T. Coleridge, *On the Constitution of Church and State* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976 [1830]), 143.

him. There is a secret and to me as yet unintelligible communion of spirit betwixt them, on the ground of a certain German mysticism and transcendental lake-poetry which I am not yet up to.’⁵⁸ Although they retained their friendship, their intellectual relations became strained when Coleridge disagreed with Irving’s doctrine of the person of Christ and his apocalyptic views after 1826.

Coleridge thought that man was essentially a religious being and that man’s nature was diseased. Although he had a philosophical understanding of original sin, redemption was the focal point of his Christian theology, and he held that ‘Christianity and Redemption are equivalent terms’.⁵⁹ By the work of Christ ordinary believers remove the worse stain of sin, and restore themselves to the family of God.⁶⁰

You have incurred a debt of death to the evil nature! You have sold yourself over the sin! and relatively to you, and to all your means and resources, the seal on the bond is the seal of necessity! Its stamp is the Nature of Evil. But the Stranger has appeared, the forgiving Friend has come, even the Son of God from heaven: and to as many as have faith in His name, I say – the debt is paid for you! The satisfaction has been made.⁶¹

In his *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge further developed his views on the doctrine of redemption, stressing the Redeemer’s earthly work in humanity. ‘The agent and the personal cause of the Redemption of mankind’, he asserted, ‘is the Word and only begotten Son of the Living God, incarnate, tempted, agonizing, crucified, submitting to death, resurgent, communicant of his Spirit, ascendant, and obtaining for his Church the descent and

⁵⁸ Chalmers, a letter to his wife dated 10 May 1826, in Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers*, III, 160.

⁵⁹ Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 274. He saw that man’s spirituality is supported by the Will, and vice versa; ‘If there be ought spiritual in man, the will must be such. If there be a will, there must be a spirituality in man’. Therefore for Coleridge man was a fallen creature ‘not by accident of bodily constitution or any other cause, but as diseased in his will – in that will which is the true and only strict synonym of the word I, or the intelligent Self’. But he admitted the effective power of religion comes directly from God in Christ. (from Tulloch, 16)

⁶⁰ Robert S. Franks, *The Work of Christ: a Historical Study of Christian Doctrine* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd, 1962), 653

⁶¹ Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 289f.

communion of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter'.⁶² The Fall and Redemption were always correlated in Coleridge's mind.⁶³ By Christ's redemption, believers were born anew in the spirit to Christ and the consequences were:

Sanctification from sin, and liberation from the inherent and penal consequences of sin in the world to come, with all the means and processes of sanctification by the Word and the Spirit: these consequents being the same for the sinner relatively to God and his own soul, as the satisfaction of a debt for a debtor relatively to his creditor; as the sacrificial atonement made by the Priest for the transgressor of the Mosaic Law; as the reconciliation to an alienated Parent for a Son who had estranged himself from his Father's house and presence; and as a redemptive ransom for a slave or captive.⁶⁴

The reality of redemption was, in Coleridge's thought, the regeneration of the sinner brought about by the transcendent operation of the incarnate Word, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵

Concerning Christ's mysterious flesh or humanity, Coleridge did not say much. He was content with the brief Scriptural passage about 'the Word became flesh', observing that 'it is enough for me to know that the Son of God became flesh, being born of a woman, and more than this, it appears to me, was unknown to the Apostles, or, if known, not taught by them as appertaining to a saving faith in Christ'.⁶⁶ But when we examine his writings further, we note that Coleridge was deeply concerned with the importance of Christ's human nature in the redemptive process; 'I believe that this assumption of humanity by the Son of God was revealed and realized to us by the Word made flesh, and manifested to us in Christ Jesus; and that his miraculous birth, his agony, his crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension, were all both symbols of our redemption and necessary parts of the awful process'.⁶⁷ Moreover,

⁶² Ibid., 297.

⁶³ Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, 127.

⁶⁴ Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 297.

⁶⁵ Franks, *The Work of Christ*, 654.

⁶⁶ Coleridge, *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed., Henry Nelson Coleridge, 4 vols. (London: W. Pickering, 1836-1839), III, 102 (Notes on Donne, Sermon II. Isaiah vii. 14. p. 11. Oct. 1831)

⁶⁷ Coleridge, *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I, 392f. (Omniana).

he described the human nature of Christ in his actual bodily suffering in a unique phrase, commenting as follows on the account of Christ's death in John 19:35-35:

St. John did not mean, I apprehend, to insinuate that the spear-thrust made the *death*, merely as such, certain or evident, but that the effusion showed the human nature. "I saw it," he would say, "with my own eyes. It was real blood, composed of lymph and crassamentum, and not a mere celestial ichor, as the Phantasmists allege".⁶⁸

For Coleridge, Jesus Christ was 'the Son of Mary, in whom the Word ... tabernacled'.

In order to become the Redeemer of humanity, on the other hand, the deity and humanity were both necessary. Christ was neither a mere man, as Socinians believed, nor did he take a false humanity (docetism), but taking the sins of the world to redeem all of us.⁶⁹

Even so, in the instance of the crucifixion, the same image is present to the theanthropist and to the psilanthropist or Socinian – but to the latter it represents a mere man, a good man indeed and divinely inspired, but still a mere man, even as Moses or Paul, dying in attestation of the truth of his preaching, and in order by his resurrection to give a proof of his mission, and inclusively of the resurrection of all men: - to the former it represents God incarnate taking upon himself the sins of the world, and himself thereby redeeming us, and giving us life everlasting, not merely teaching it.⁷⁰

At this time Irving changed his opinions about the world's conversion. He had thought that 'the present world is to be converted unto the Lord, and so slide by a natural inclination into the Church – the present reign of Satan hastening, of its own accord, into the millennial reign of Christ', but his attitude became radically pessimistic, holding that 'all the dead society, churches, kingdoms, fashions of this world, galvanically kept in motion until the end, should be finally burned up and destroyed'.⁷¹ Coleridge considered religion and

⁶⁸ Coleridge, *Table Talk*, I (29 December 1822) in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Carl Woodring (London: Routledge, 1990), 23f.

⁶⁹ About the doctrine of predestination, Coleridge did not express his opinion fully, but only pointed out some problems on it. At the same time he admitted man's perfect freedom of will. In this context Coleridge wanted to understand the conflict between man's freedom and God's free election in terms of 'man's perfect freedom is the conformity of his finite will with the Absolute Will of God'. Therefore, although Coleridge used the words of 'all men' in Christ's redemptive work, it cannot be interpreted as fully meaning the doctrine of universal atonement, as McLeod Campbell claimed. See Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, 121-4.

⁷⁰ Coleridge, *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I, 394. (Omniana)

⁷¹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 190f.

politics as bound up together, and his thoughts became closely intertwined. At the time of the Bristol Lectures around 1794 and 1796, Coleridge had deep sympathy with the French Revolution, expecting it would usher in the triumph of social justice.⁷² But as his ideas developed and he embraced Trinitarian theology, Coleridge came to focus on a more theological understanding of politics, with an emphasis on man's disease and guilt and later on redemption and regeneration. However, all this said, it is not clear whether or not Irving inherited the idea of a 'pessimistic revolving world' from Coleridge.⁷³

Irving acknowledged Coleridge's influence on his teaching in the dedication of his published sermon to the London Missionary Society at Whitefield's Chapel, Tottenham Court Road, in 1824. When the Society had asked Irving to deliver the annual sermon, they had expected that Irving would praise its past accomplishments and encourage the hearers to support the Society. But Irving's speech was far from what they had expected. He pointed to the Messiah's instruction to the first missionaries, based on Matt. X. 5-42, 'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purse; nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat'.⁷⁴ It was a simple message which presented the lives of the Apostles with miraculous workings and independent of all earthly assistance.⁷⁵ Irving, who had once hoped to be a missionary, also pointed out that nineteenth-century churches had drifted from apostolic purity by depending too much on earthly organization, which led them to be powerless in God's work.

⁷² Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, 8.

⁷³ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 191. While Oliphant thought there was no strong connection between Coleridge and Irving about the idea of a pessimistic world, others, for example, Arnold Dallimore, regard Coleridge as the source of Irving's idea of a pessimistic world in his *The Life of Edward Irving, the Fore-Runner of the Charismatic Movement* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 47.

⁷⁴ Irving, *Missionaries after the Apostolic School*, in *CW*, I, 437.

⁷⁵ In his Preface to *Missionaries after the Apostolic School*, Irving noted that 'I searched the Scriptures in secret; and in their pious companies conversed of the convictions which were secretly brought to my mind concerning the missionary work' in *CW*, I, 427.

Nor was the public response positive. Irving's sermon alienated the audience, especially members of the Society, and they began to doubt Irving's mental stability. Further, as we have seen, Irving dedicated the published version to Coleridge, in elaborate terms expressed 'the gratitude of a disciple to a wise and generous teacher'.

You have been more profitable to my faith in orthodox doctrine, to my spiritual understanding of the word of God, and to my right conception of the Christian Church, than any or all of the men with whom I have entertained friendship and conversation ... I have partaken so much high intellectual enjoyment from being admitted into the close and familiar intercourse with which you have honoured me, and your many conversations concerning the revelations of the Christian faith have been so profitable to me in every sense, as a student and a preacher of the gospel, as a spiritual man and a Christian pastor, and your high intelligence and great learning have at all times so kindly stopped to my ignorance and inexperience, that not merely with the affection of friend, and the honour due from youth to experienced age, but with the gratitude of a disciple to a wise and generous teacher, of an anxious inquirer to the good man who hath helped him in the way of truth, I do now presume to offer you the first fruits of my mind since it received a new impulse towards truth, and a new insight into its depths from listening to your discourse.⁷⁶

However, given that the published sermon was received 'with shouts of angry criticism from all sides', his dedication to Coleridge had no good effect.⁷⁷

Although Coleridge affirmed the genuine humanity of Christ, he protested against Irving's 'somewhat too adventurous speculation on the Persons of the Trinity and the body of our Lord' in his *On the Constitution of Church and State*.⁷⁸ Coleridge annotated Irving's doctrine in his *Marginalia*, denouncing Irving's idea as a 'glaring Tritheism, - nay rather Tri-daemonism'.⁷⁹ But it is interesting to note that later when Irving was deposed by Presbytery of Annan on the charge of his teaching of the doctrine of Christ's sinful flesh,

⁷⁶ Irving, *CW*, I, 427f.

⁷⁷ Mrs Montagu told Irving the dedication would do Coleridge no good. Samuel T. Coleridge, *On the Constitution of Church and State* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976 [first published in 1830]), 142.

⁷⁸ Coleridge, *On the Constitution of Church and State*, 141.

⁷⁹ Samuel T. Coleridge, *Marginalia*, ed. H.J. Jackson and George Whalley (London: Routledge, 1992), III, 17, 42; *Table Talk*, I, 127f.

Coleridge was sympathetic to Irving, saying ‘but his [Irving’s] meaning such as it is, is orthodox’.⁸⁰

More severe criticism from Coleridge was directed at Irving’s views on the Apocalypse and the book of Daniel. After 1826 Coleridge denounced Irving for his interpretation of the apocalyptic materials which many believed to have been the product of his association with James Hatley Frere. Coleridge acknowledged that ‘the Apocalypse is truly the Supplement to the three preceding main divisions of the New Testament, and the requisite Complement of the Christian Faith’;⁸¹ however, he could not accept Irving’s apocalyptic interpretation, which in Coleridge’s point of view mainly relied on Daniel and Revelation;⁸² ‘I have no faith in his prophesying; small sympathy with his fulminations; and in certain peculiarities of his theological system, as distinct from his religious principles, I cannot see my way’.⁸³ Coleridge thought Irving was in a ‘state of mind in which it is difficult to distinguish self-delusion from spiritual quackery’.⁸⁴ Despite these criticisms, Coleridge always regarded him as his friend.⁸⁵

Although it is not easy to discern which of Coleridge’s ideas contributed most to Irving’s thought⁸⁶, one such idea could be Coleridge’s view of the humanity of Christ as a ‘sacramental sign’ of the Godhead. Coleridge’s idea of the Eucharist indicates ‘the

⁸⁰ Coleridge, *Table Talk*, I (14 August 1833), 422f.

⁸¹ Samuel T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971), vol. VI, 558(8 February 1826).

⁸² Coleridge, *Table Talk*, II (Appendix N), 400; *Marginalia*, III, 417, 449; *On the Constitution of Church and State*, 140.

⁸³ Coleridge, *On the Constitution of Church and State*, 142f.

⁸⁴ Edmund K. Chambers, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Biographical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), 322; Coleridge, *On the Constitution of Church and State*, 133. ‘Coleridge thought Irving’s mistake was lying in the false assumption that the Apocalypse contains a series of events in an historico-chronological arrangements not as the Prophets predicted but as the Annalist in the Books of Samuel, Kings, or Chronicles’.

⁸⁵ Samuel T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* in 6 Vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971), vol. VI, 661(3 Jan. 1827), 976(3 July 1829).

⁸⁶ Irving was attracted by Coleridge’s way of explanation of the Trinity in ‘contradictory terms’ in *PW*, I, 230. But this cannot be interpreted that Irving was affected by Coleridge’s Trinitarian idea. Recently Peter Elliot has explored the co-influences between Irving and Coleridge, in chapter 4 of ‘Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis’.

continued assimilation of and to the Divine Humanity'.⁸⁷ In *Aids to Reflection*, he considered the doctrine of baptism in section of 'Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion':

The Word unfolding the Sacrament, and the Sacrament sealing the Word; the Word as a Light, informing and clearing the sense of the Seal, and this again, as a Seal, confirming and ratifying the truth of the Word ... truly the Word is a Light and the Sacraments have in them of the same Light illuminating them. This (sacrament) of Baptism, the Ancients do particularly express by Light.⁸⁸

Coleridge saw the sacrament of Baptism as a means of conveying the true meaning of the Word of God. Apart from its outward ceremony, Coleridge thought, Baptism had a meaning of sanctifying believers by the Word. It was their faith in Christ that confirmed doctrine and example in heart and life; he affirmed that it was faith as 'a declared mean and condition of our partaking of his spiritual Body, and of being "cloathed upon" with his righteousness; that properly makes us Christians'.⁸⁹ Baptism was the symbol of the mystery of redemption. While Coleridge saw that regeneration in the Christian life was induced by the sacrament of baptism in faith, Irving applied this formula to his idea of Spirit Baptism. Stressing the work of the Holy Spirit, Irving substituted 'receiving the Spirit' for Coleridge's 'faith' in the sacrament of Baptism. Thus he changed Coleridge's understanding of Baptism into more animated form. Coleridge's thought nourished the formation of Irving's spiritual ideas.⁹⁰ Later, Irving's idea of Spirit Baptism would form a connecting point between the life of Jesus Christ and that of human beings.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Coleridge, *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, III, 285. (Notes on Jeremy Taylor, Ib. p. 192)

⁸⁸ Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 322f.

⁸⁹ Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 329.

⁹⁰ Coleridge praised Irving's views concerning Christ's baptism with the Spirit and the work of the Spirit in common believers (*Marginalia*, III, 52).

⁹¹ Concerning the relationship between symbolic idea of Baptism and Irving's Spirit Baptism, see, chapter V. C.2. 'Mystical Union in the Sacraments'.

A.1.d. Jesus in the Apocalyptic Dream: Mr Hatley Frere

James Hatley Frere (1779-1866), a writer on prophecy, published *A Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras and St John* in 1815. He argued that all the prophetic writings had been formed upon one plan which would bring the establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom in 1867.⁹²

Frere was looking for an 'ardent hearer' to his prophetic ideas, and he happened to contact Irving who had a mind that 'all ingenuous and ready to be taught'. In 1825, on meeting Irving, Frere reportedly shouted "Here is the man!" and Irving soon became Frere's disciple and expositor.⁹³

Apocalyptic study, which charmed Irving deeply, brought him a 'refuge in the ark of His salvation from the deluge of wrath which abideth the impenitent'.⁹⁴ Although Irving's prophetic study was criticised by both his friends and the public, it provided him with exciting material and brought comfort to his grieving heart. Irving fastened the coming of Christ, which he wanted to 'restore to the enterprise and doctrines of universal Christianity, without consideration of what was practicable or how it would be realised'.⁹⁵

In Irving's mind, Christ would come in the near future and He was not a being of remote existence; rather, He was a being who would come in a real sense. According to Margaret Oliphant, for Irving:

⁹² Frere tried to show that all prophetic visions (The Book of the Revelation, Four Visions of Daniel, Esdras' Vision) are saying in one accord that in A.D.1867, the period of the progress of the Kingdom of Christ (pagan nations' conversion) would finish, and the period of the perfection of the Kingdom of Christ (the Millennium) would start. See, James Hatley Frere, *A Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras and St John, Shewing that all the Prophetic Writings are Formed upon One Plan* (London: Hatchard, 1815).

⁹³ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 221.

⁹⁴ Ibid., I, 226f. (From Irving's dedicational letter to Hatley Frere, in *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God*.)

⁹⁵ Ibid., I, 225.

The Lord became no distant Presence, but a Person so intensely realised and visible, that the adoring eye perceived the human pulses throbbing in His veins; and for awe, and love of that mysterious union, the worshipper could not keep silence.⁹⁶

Although Christ would come in 'Judgement of wrath', for Irving, His coming would console the elect by Christ's great love. He would come as the Real Shepherd and hold them with His flesh. For Irving, Christ would be 'in the midst of them, shall lead them by rivers of living waters, and wipe away all tears from their eyes'.⁹⁷ This is one of the ideas in Irving's favourite part of scripture, the Book of Psalms (Ps. 23), which combined with Frere's apocalyptic writings on the Lord's coming in Irving's mind-set, which contributed undoubtedly to his Christology and Millennialism.⁹⁸

A.1.e. The Other Possible Source: Richard Hooker

Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* had been one of Irving's favourite readings since his boyhood; indeed, in the preface to the third edition of his first book, *For the Oracles of God*, Irving described Hooker as his 'companion' in theology.⁹⁹ Irving was very fond of Hooker's works and collected them enthusiastically.¹⁰⁰ The discussion of Christ's human nature in the *Ecclesiastical Polity* may well have influenced Irving's Christology.¹⁰¹ In 1835, *Fraser's Magazine* discussed Irving's indebtedness to Hooker:

But the circumstance of his early life which most decidedly gave the peculiar tone to his character, and most contributed to draw forth its strength, was meeting with Hooker's *Eccl. Pol.* when a boy, at a farm-house near his father's. Though only a boy, he justly appreciated the 'judicious Hooker,' and from this source he derived accurate

⁹⁶ Ibid., I, 378.

⁹⁷ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 91.

⁹⁸ James Hatley Frere, *On the General Structure of the Apocalypse, Being a Brief Introduction to its Minute Interpretation* (London: Hatchard & Son, 1826), 16.

⁹⁹ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, xv.

¹⁰⁰ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 31.

¹⁰¹ There is a theological connection between R. Hooker and S. T. Coleridge. According to J. Tulloch, Coleridge highly valued R. Hooker, and he 'constantly claims to do nothing more than re-assert the principles of Hooker, of Henry More, of John Smith, and Leighton, all of whom he speaks of as 'Platonizing divines!'. Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century*, 12.

theology and sound doctrine to guide his studies; while he also learned what the true standing of a church is, and in learning these great truths imbibed a partiality for the nervous though antiquated phraseology in which they were expressed by Hooker.¹⁰²

Richard Hooker (1554-1600) gave a high priority to the incarnation in the world's salvation. God's plan of human salvation, according to Hooker, would have been impossible without the death of the Son in human flesh.¹⁰³ As Hooker expressed the point, 'to save the world it was of necessity the Son of God should be incarnate, and that God should be in Christ'.¹⁰⁴ 'Wherefore taking to himself our flesh, and by his incarnation making it his own flesh, he had now of his own although from us what to offer unto God for us'.¹⁰⁵ By taking 'our flesh' Christ became a mediator between God and humanity and by this obedience the relationship was restored.

The flesh and the conjunction of the flesh with God began both at one instant; his making and taking to himself our flesh was but one act, so that in Christ there is no personal subsistence but one, and that from everlasting. By taking only the nature of man he still continueth one person, and changeth but the manner of his subsisting, which was before in the mere glory of the Son of God, and is now in the habit of our flesh.¹⁰⁶

As Christ's body was corruptible, according to Hooker, it could be slain, and after glorification it still retained the scars and marks. During the incarnation there was no alteration of the human nature in Christ. Rather, 'the conjunction of the nature of God with the nature of man' in Christ made him a fountain of life.¹⁰⁷ Sharing flesh between God and man, according to Hooker, meant that 'we have the right to the same inheritance with Christ' in the kingdom of heaven.¹⁰⁸ In his exploration of Christ's humanity, Hooker developed the

¹⁰² *Fraser's Magazine* (January, 1835), 4.

¹⁰³ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (London: Aldine House, 1907), 203.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 215. Hooker explains that we have the same inheritance with Christ, but it could not be the same right because we cannot reach his being.

idea of celestial inheritance through the flesh shared between God and man, which Irving would later embrace.

As Christ hath purchased that heavenly kingdom the last perfection whereof is *glory in the life to come*, grace in this life a preparation thereunto; so the same he hath “opened” to the world in such sort, that whereas none can possibly without him attain salvation, by him “all that believe” are saved. Now whatsoever he did or suffered, the end thereof was to open the doors of the kingdom of heaven which our iniquities had “shut up.” But because by *ascending after that the sharpness of death* was overcome, he took the very *local possession* of glory, and that *to the use of all that are his*, even as himself before had witnessed, “I go to prepare a place for you;” and again, “Whom thou hast given me, O Father, *I will that where I am they be also with me*, that my glory which thou hast given me they may behold:” it appeareth that *when Christ did ascend* he then most *liberally opened* the kingdom of heaven, *to the end* that with him and by him all believers might reign.¹⁰⁹

In the later controversy over his Christology, Irving defended his orthodoxy in an article entitled ‘On the Human Nature of Christ’ in the *Morning Watch*. In this article, he referred to several sources, but gave prominence to Hooker’s *Ecclesiastical Polity*.¹¹⁰

Hooker’s discussion of Christ’s human body did show a remarkable resemblance to that of Irving. Hooker had written as follows:

And as God hath in Christ unspeakably glorified the nobler, so likewise the meaner part of our nature, the very bodily substance of man. For in this respect his body, which by natural condition was corruptible, wanted the gift of everlasting immunity from death, passion, and dissolution, till God, which gave it to be slain for sin, had for righteousness sake restored it to life with certainty of endless continuance. Yea, in this respect the very glorified body of Christ retained in it the scars and marks of former mortality. We nothing doubt, but God hath many ways above the reach of our capacities exalted that body which it hath pleased him to make his own; that body wherewith he hath saved the world; that body which hath been and is the root of eternal life, the Instrument wherewith Deity worketh, the Sacrifice which taketh away sin, the Price which hath ransomed souls from death, the Leader of the whole army of bodies that shall rise again. For though it had a beginning from us, yet God hath given it vital efficacy, heaven hath endowed it with celestial power, that virtue it hath from above, in regard whereof all the angels of heaven adore it. – Notwithstanding, a body

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 177.

¹¹⁰ *The Morning Watch* was a quarterly magazine representing the thoughts of the Albury Park Conference, and appeared from 1829 to 1833. In its opening issue of March 1829, Irving, a regular attending member at the Albury Conference, contributed his article defending his views regarding the incarnation.

still it continueth, a body consubstantial with our bodies, a body of the same, both nature and measure, which it had on earth.¹¹¹

In the thought of both Hooker and Irving, Christ's body, which was the same as man's, had provided the way of communion between the Creator and creatures. The presence of the Redeemer, which had been derived from a genuinely human body, would continue until the point of believers' resurrection. Hooker understood that the Son of God's taking human flesh was humiliating to the Deity, while Christ's death on the cross was a humiliation to manhood.¹¹² His Ascension was 'a plain local translation of Christ according to his manhood from the lower to the higher parts of the world', and his sitting at the right hand of God (Luke, 22:69) was 'the actual exercise of that regency and dominion wherein the manhood of Christ is joined and matched with the Deity of the Son of God'.¹¹³ The idea that Christ and common believers shared the same body foreshadowed the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven for all human beings for both Hooker and Irving.

A.2. Formation of the Idea of the Person of Christ

A.2.a. Sermons on the Doctrine of the Trinity

Beginning in July 1825, Irving delivered a series of sermons on the Trinity. In a letter to his wife, Irving described the first of these sermons, which was more homiletic than doctrinal:

Last Sabbath I preached in the morning on the subject of the Trinity, showing that the revelation of the Word consisted of three parts – Law, Gospel, and Obedience – which were severally the forms of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; so that a trinity was everywhere in the Word of God; and I intended to continue the same subject next

¹¹¹ Irving's quotation of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, 217 in his article 'On the Human Nature of Christ', which is in *MW*, I (March, 1829): 75-99.

¹¹² Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, 223.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 223 – 4. Hooker claimed that Christ made human flesh his own, but retained consubstantiality with human bodies even after his resurrection. In the case of Irving, he maintained that Christ's body did not change until his resurrection (*Orthodox and Catholic*, 66). I will explain more about this in the later part of this chapter.

Sabbath, and on the following one to show that there are three constant states by which the soul expresses her homage to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: - First, prayer; secondly, faith; and thirdly, activity, which are a trinity in unity with the new man.¹¹⁴

These discourses were delivered when his preaching in the Caledonian Chapel was at the height of its fame and his sermons warmly received.¹¹⁵ Irving proposed God the Father's love, which was manifested through his Son, was great and even mysterious;

Now, if any one doubt of God's love to man, let him come hither and behold the high mystery of the incarnation, the humiliation and the death of this uncreated object of Jehovah's love; that for the love he bare to the children of men, that they might not perish but have everlasting life, he spared not his dear Son, but laid his hand heavy upon him; yea, with his reproach he did break his heart. Mystery of mysteries! Mystery of love! The everlasting Father suspend the everlasting cords of his love, draw his sword to smite the Man of his right hand in order to recover children who were corrupt, rebellious, and buried in transgression! But true it is, however marvellous and surpassing human invention, that this powerful affection in the bosom of God was suspended for a while, and his only begotten Son was put to grief, and the countenance of the Father was hidden from the only begotten, and he was forsake of his God, all out of love to the sons of men, that they might not perish, but have everlasting life.¹¹⁶

Irving maintained that the Godhead's love was manifested in each person of the Trinity. He claimed that what could draw common believers to the love of God 'from that timorous distance at which we naturally stand' was only Christ's submission of His will to the Father's, which was expressed through 'Christ's incarnation, humiliation, and death'. Since Christ had purchased human redemption by his incarnation and death, humans received God's love by grace. Further, when believers 'give their ear to the Word of God, which is Christ', they would be led by the same Holy Spirit; 'The Word, which is Christ, opens the way; and the Spirit leads us in the way'.¹¹⁷ Irving insisted that God's love was displayed in the earthly life of Christ but only made real to common believers through the work of the Holy Spirit. Until this point, Irving had described the work of the Holy Spirit

¹¹⁴ Irving, 'a letter to his wife, from 25 Bedford Square; 19 July, 1825' in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 238.

¹¹⁵ *Fraser's Magazine* (January 1835), 5.

¹¹⁶ Irving, 'The Fatherhood of God', in *Thirty Sermons*, 173.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

mainly as a moral guide to faith. Irving's sermons of 1825 on the Trinity were 'more remarkable than any of his other productions' but they did not attract much attention outside Hatton Garden and 'no man hinted heresy'.¹¹⁸

Doctrinal Meaning of the Trinity

The doctrine of Trinity was, for Irving, 'a first principle in all sound theology'.¹¹⁹ Irving sought to explore the doctrine of the Trinity which Irving considered as 'weighty form of speech, most pregnant form of blessing, within the shortest compass contains the largest and most precious burden of truth'.¹²⁰

The doctrine especially of the blessed Trinity, and the offices sustained by the Persons thereof in our salvation, I desire, for my church and for myself, to acknowledge, was then opened to us, and remained no longer, as it is to most, a believed but unknown mystery.¹²¹

Later, when Irving explored the idea of the human nature of Christ, his idea of the Trinity assumed a more dogmatic character. This is particularly evident in *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons*.

To open the subject in all its bearings, and to connect it with the other great heads of Divine doctrines, especially with the doctrine of the Trinity, and to shew the several offices of the Divine persons, in the great work of making the Word flesh; this truly was the good purpose with which I undertook and completed the four sermons upon the Origin, the End, the Act, and the Fruit of the Incarnation.¹²²

Irving believed that all three persons in the Trinity were regarded as 'the reality'. In the sacrament of Baptism, the biblical words 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the

¹¹⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 3; Graham McFarlane, *Christ and Spirit: The Doctrine of the Incarnation According to Edward Irving* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), 4, 12. McFarlane argues that Western theologians have treated the two doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation 'separately, or at best, in a binitarian manner', he continues, but Irving holds them together 'in such a way as to make sense of the Spirit's place in the redemptive narratives'.

¹¹⁹ Irving, *God our Father*, in *CW*, IV, 252.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹²¹ E. Irving, *The Last Days: A Discourse on the Evil Character of These our Times: Proving Them to be the 'Perilous Times' of the 'Last Days'* (London: RB Seeley and W Burnside, 1828), x.

¹²² Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in *CW*, V, 3.

Son, and of the Holy Ghost' meant that 'if the Father be a reality, the Holy Ghost is a reality; and if the Father be a Person in the Godhead, so is the Son, and so is the Holy Ghost'.¹²³

In his doctrine of the Trinity, Christ was at the centre for his understanding. God was in Christ since the Godhead's glory and work were revealed through Christ; 'for in Him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily'. Irving continued:

He was not the Word merely, but He was the will of the Father, so that He could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father:" and He was not only the fullness of the Father's will, and of the word of the Son, but He was also the fullness of the power of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in Him without measure; so that He could say of the Spirit, "He shall testify of me;" "whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak ... He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." Which mystery of the fullness of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Spirit – that was manifest in Christ is expressed by Himself in these words: "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I that he (the Spirit of truth) shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."¹²⁴

In Irving's Christology, the second person of the Trinity is the revelation of the first, and the Son revealed the grace and love of the Father in incarnate humanity. 'No one', insisted Irving, 'knew of the grace and truth and fatherly love which was on the bosom of the Creator until Christ came and revealed it, and by the one offering of Himself brought all sacrifices to an end.'¹²⁵ For Irving, the incarnation had occurred 'in order to make known to us the love of His Father and our Father', and so that the Son could offer 'Himself as a ransom for our sins.'¹²⁶

A.2.b. Exploration in Thoughts

Through the sermons on the Trinity, Irving formed his idea of the person of Christ. The insights that Irving had acquired from his boyhood until the period of his London settlement

¹²³ Irving, *Homilies on Baptism* in *CW*, II, 255.

¹²⁴ Irving, *God our Father*, in *CW*, IV, 223f.

¹²⁵ Irving, *The Lord's Prayer* in *CW*, III, 130.

¹²⁶ Irving, *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses*, III, 443; *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 88.

brought him to the idea that Christ should have a real humanity, including having the same flesh as that of Irving.

It soon became clear that Irving's Caledonian Chapel, with its seating for five hundred, was too small to contain the rapidly growing congregation. It was proposed to build a larger church 'on grounds patriotic as well as religious'.¹²⁷ That is, the larger church would both accommodate the growing congregation and provide 'additional means for the spiritual welfare of Scotchmen in London'.¹²⁸ Irving had long been concerned for the spiritual guidance of the estimated 100,000 Scots residing in London. As the new building took its shape, so did Irving's theological framework.

While the new National Scotch Church was under construction, Irving received a call from the elders of St. Cuthbert's parish church in Edinburgh. Irving was delighted, as he had long wished to minister to a church in Scotland's provincial capital. However, he could not accept this call, which 'had come sooner than he had expected': he feared that his departure from London would 'disperse the flock, and smite down the proposed National Church', denying the London Scots the opportunity this church 'would afford them of returning to the bosom of the Church'.¹²⁹

The Will of the Father

Another of Irving's discourses from 1825, on the 'Will of the Father' was based mainly on the gospel of John. While Irving's discourse on the Trinity was largely homiletic, his discourse on the 'Will of the Father' was more doctrinal. He sought to show that it was through Christ that the will of the Father was revealed.¹³⁰ Keeping to a traditional understanding of the three persons of the Trinity – the Father's will, Christ's revelation, and

¹²⁷ Brough, *The Centenary of Regent Square 1827-1927*, 12.

¹²⁸ Hair, *Regent Square, Eighty Years of a London Congregation*, 47.

¹²⁹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 231-8.

¹³⁰ Irving's discourse upon the 'Will of the Father' was based on John i. 13, 14; v. 20, 21; vi. 37, 44, 65; viii. 16, 19, 26, 28; x. 27, 29. (from Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 235)

the Holy Spirit's working – Irving tried to demonstrate that Christ was the way, the truth, and the life through whom the Father's love was manifested: 'the will of the Father and the Eternal Word ... was revealed to Christ'.¹³¹ Since 'the origin and source of this new life is the will of the Father', Christ attributed his authority to the Father: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44).¹³² God, moreover, willed the salvation of men:

the Father is willing, is desirous, that we should be saved: nay, so great is his love to the world, that he spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.¹³³

In exploring both the doctrine of the Trinity and the 'Will of the Father', Irving focused on the Incarnation. Christ's message to John the Baptist (Luke 7) was, Irving believed, a fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 61. As the word of Christ was in the will of the Father, 'so were His works the acts of the Spirit dwelling in Him, and about to proceed from Him'.¹³⁴

A.2.c. Ideas from the Sacraments (The Holy Spirit and its Work in the Sacraments concerning the Body of Christ)

Irving speculated about Christ's incarnation in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit and his idea of Baptism. He thought that the Godhead's works of creation and redemption came through the harmonious action of the three persons of the Trinity. Christ, who was the offspring of the Father's will, was in the work of the Spirit also. The Holy Ghost made the flesh of Christ 'in the completeness and perfectness of the suffering creature, burdened with

¹³¹ Irving, 'The Will of the Father Preceding the Faith of the Word', in *Thirty Sermons*, 235.

¹³² Ibid., 232.

¹³³ Ibid., 237.

¹³⁴ Irving's letter to his wife dated 19 July 1825, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 239.

the substance of all burdens, distressed with the weakness of all infirmities, and suffering the excruciation of all diseases, and bearing the amount of all wrath and indignation of God'.¹³⁵

Reflection on the sacrament of Baptism helped Irving shape his Christology. Romans 6 spoke of spiritual regeneration through the sacrament. As Christ was crucified and buried after his baptism, common believers were also baptized, which signified that they were crucified and buried with Christ. As Christ was raised by the Father, the baptized may also be raised. The Holy Spirit, working in the souls of believers, was a 'standing monument to all ages of the same mighty operation'.¹³⁶

Although Irving interpreted the Pauline expression, 'we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection' and 'shall also live with him' to refer not to the future life, but to the present life of the baptised person, he also saw it in an apocalyptic sense. The *Homilies on Baptism* was written partly in light of the death of his son, Edward, and it contained the idea that infant baptism expressed the baby's immortality; 'this ordinance is infant baptism, wherein is declared and taught unto the parent the whole mystery of this little creature's immortality, and of its relationship to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost'.¹³⁷ In Irving's thought, the approaching Second Advent implied the beginning of a new life, and the concept of the sacrament of baptism 'grew out of a symbol and ceremony into an immortal birth, to which God Himself pledged His word'.¹³⁸

The most significant result of this exploration of Baptism, in relation to John the Baptist, was that Irving described for the first time Christ's body as comprised of 'sinful flesh'. Christ, according to Irving, was made perfect through suffering, not by His nature. With the 'rent veil of His flesh', Christ entered this suffering world, experienced sorrow and grief, and conquered death.

¹³⁵ Irving, *The Parable of the Sower*, in *CW*, I, 265.

¹³⁶ Irving, *The Temptation* in *CW*, II, 198.

¹³⁷ Irving, *Homilies on Baptism* in *CW*, II, 389.

¹³⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 378.

This is the spirit of His incarnation, one great end and meaning of His manifestation in **sinful flesh**, to teach humanity how there resideth with the Spirit of God a power to fortify humanity, and make it victorious over all trials and temptations, - a power to reconstruct the fallen ruins of humanity into a temple of holiness, wherein the service of God shall proceed more purely than it did in the tabernacle of Moses, or in the temple of Solomon, or any other emblem of the heart of man, which is the only temple of the most high God.¹³⁹

It was the Spirit that fortified and made holy Christ's sinful flesh, by which the Godhead was manifested in the incarnation. In describing human nature as 'sinful', Irving stressed the power of the Holy Spirit. Although Christ's body was a sinful-like creature, the Spirit reconstructed this 'fallen ruins of humanity into a temple of holiness'. Moreover, the Spirit, which never before had been imparted to sinful human nature, now promised to perform the same office in all who would take up Christ's cross and follow Him.¹⁴⁰ What was distinctive in Irving's treatment of the Holy Spirit was that he extended this concept to common believers.¹⁴¹ While Irving had first mentioned Christ's 'sinful flesh' in his discourse on 'John the Baptist' in 1823, the concept was not developed until his *Homilies on the Lord's Supper*, a work that was apparently prepared in 1826, at the same time as the *Homilies on Baptism*.

In his *Homilies on the Lord's Supper*, Irving portrayed the body of Christ as the same as that of human beings, but made holy by the work of the Holy Spirit. In the Lord's Supper, he maintained, common believers received the Spirit, which ultimately made them 'partake the flesh and blood of Christ'.¹⁴²

In taking the Virgin's substance at the incarnation, Christ became consubstantial with human beings. This sinful substance, Irving continued, 'was made perfectly holy in all its

¹³⁹ Irving, *John the Baptist* in *CW*, II, 98.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ This tendency can be found in his later work, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* [1826], *The Day of Pentecost or the Baptism with the Holy Ghost* (1831), and most of his works on the gift of tongues.

¹⁴² Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 550.

acts, passions, and operations’ by the work of Holy Spirit.¹⁴³ And just as Christ’s mortal body was ‘transmuted and transfigured to His immortal body by a greater measure of the Spirit’s re-creating power’, so, according to Irving, the Spirit came to common believers, delivered them from the power of sin and enabled them to be the same flesh and blood of Christ; this was, for Irving, the meaning of the eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood at the Lord’s Supper.¹⁴⁴

B. The ‘Sinful Flesh’, without Sin

B.1. The Doctrine of the Incarnation

Irving’s Christology found its fullest expression in the publication of *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses in Three Volumes* at the end of November 1828. It was the fruit of his exploration of the subject after his sermon on the Trinity, and was developed at the request of his congregation, in which many found the sermons on the Incarnation ‘most profitable to their souls’.¹⁴⁵

B.1.a. The First Publication of the Subject.

The National Scotch Church in Regent Square had opened in May 1827, with Chalmers delivering the official opening sermon. Irving’s teaching in the new church led some in the congregation to believe that they were promoting ‘a work which is likely to be the means, in God’s hand, of greatly advancing the spiritual interests of our countrymen in the

¹⁴³ Ibid., 549.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 545.

¹⁴⁵ E. Irving, *Christ’s Holiness in Flesh* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay & Co., 1831), v.; Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 1f.

metropolis'.¹⁴⁶ Irving's long sermons, nearly three hours at a stretch, on the 'unfathomable mystery' of the Trinity were accepted by his congregation as orthodox and as vital to their faith.

The *Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*, which formed the first volume of *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses*, was to have been published earlier; however, a sudden visit from the Rev. Henry Cole of Clare Hall, Cambridge, postponed its publication until November 1828. Cole had learned of Irving's use of the term 'sinful flesh' in describing Christ's humanity. On the evening of Sunday, 28 October 1827, Cole visited the newly opened National Scotch Church to hear Irving preach. After hearing the last twenty minutes of the sermon, Cole wrote of his astonishment at hearing Irving's language about Christ's 'sinful flesh' in his *Letter to the Rev. Edward Irving*, which he published in December 1827:

I had not been seated above a minute or two, when I [Cole] found that you [Irving] were dwelling much upon the Person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: and I had hardly arrived at a perception of the train of that part of your discourse, when you made me tremble from head to foot, by thundering out the expression, 'THAT SINFUL SUBSTANCE!' meaning, the human Body of the adorable Son of God! You were declaring, 'That the main part of his victory consisted in his overcoming the sin and corruption of his human nature.' You stated, 'That he did not sin.' 'But,' you said, 'there was that SINFUL SUBSTANCE! against which he had to strive, and with which he had to conflict during the whole of his life upon earth.' ... And after making other remarks upon the awfulness of the doctrine, and asking you once or twice if such was your deliberate and considerate belief, which you answered in the affirmative, I put this final question to you, – 'Do you then, Sir, really believe, that the body of the Son of God was a mortal, corrupt, and corruptible body, like that of all mankind? the same body as yours and mine!' You answered, 'Yes! just so: certainly: that is what I believe!' – Upon which I departed.¹⁴⁷

After Cole's visit, Irving became the subject of considerable criticism. Although for a time he did not think it to be serious, Irving's name was increasingly coupled with heresy.¹⁴⁸ In response to Cole's 'false insinuation', Irving considered sending a paper to the *Christian*

¹⁴⁶ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 401.

¹⁴⁷ Henry Cole, *Letter to The Rev. Edward Irving in Refutation of the Awful Doctrines (held by him) of the Sinfulness, Mortality, and Corruptibility of the Body of Jesus Christ* (London: J. Eedes, 1827), 5-9.

¹⁴⁸ Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay & Co., 1831), vi.

Observer – an Anglican evangelical periodical. But he decided to defend his position in a longer work.¹⁴⁹

Among his other early works, Irving laid stress on Christ's genuine humanity in his first publication, *For the Oracles of God*. Here Irving described Christ as a friend, who came down from 'his highest sphere' to 'bind the link between heaven and earth' through 'the raiment of flesh'. A soteriological significance was placed in his Johannine expression, 'dwelling among us', to atone for our transgressions.

Nay, the closer to bring into fellowship, He hath despatched from His highest sphere the image of Himself to act the divine part among earthly scenes, and seeing we had fallen from His neighbourhood, and could not regain our lost estate, hath He sent forth His own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, down to our sphere, to bind the link between heaven and earth, which seemed for ever to have been broken. Who clothes Himself in the raiment of flesh; puts on like passions and affections, and presents Himself to be beheld, talked with, and handled of the sons of men.¹⁵⁰

For Irving, in order to complete the work of atonement, Christ should be a friendly and intimate being. His divinity and humanity were manifested in Christ's 'human flesh' through which he approached our state. In his *Introductory Essay*, Irving elaborated on this matter:

We do admire how this automation-inspiration can stand a thought, when it is the very RULE of heaven's communications, that in every word of God there should be a *humanity* as well as a *divinity* present. And as THE WORD which was in the beginning took not voice, nor intelligence, but flesh, human flesh, and the fullness of the Godhead was manifested *bodily*; so, when that same Word came unto the fathers by the prophets and discovered a part of his fullness, it was through their flesh or their humanity, that is, through their present conditions of spirit, and mind, and body, and outward estate, that he discovered himself to the flesh or the humanity of the people, that is, their present conditions of spirit.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ His defence was on the Sermon III, in *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*: 'The Method of accomplishing the Mystery, is by taking up the Fallen Humanity into the Personality of the eternal Son of God' and Sermon VI, 'Conclusions concerning the Subsistence of God, and the Subsistence of the Creature, derived from reflecting upon the Incarnation'.

¹⁵⁰ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 80f.

¹⁵¹ E. Irving, *Introductory Essay to Bishop Horne's Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1859 [first published in 1825]), 27f.

In July 1828 Irving published *The Last Days*, dedicated to two members of the National Scotch Church. The controversy concerning his views on the person of Christ had not yet grown serious, but Irving had apprehensions over the critics who were following in Cole's tracks.

The most catholic and orthodox doctrine, that Christ took human nature in the fallen, and not in the unfallen, state; which, to my horror and amazement, I do find those theological babes of the religious world ready to renounce. Where will their renunciations end? They will end where it is expedient for them to stop; but so long as it will bring more reputation, more rank, and more money, they will renounce whatever displeaseth public opinion. – Well, my beloved brethren, the time is come for every man to look unto the foundation he resteth on, as well as the superstructure he is rearing upon it. There is nothing safe. Everything is sapped and undermined: the first blast of fear, the first blow of violence, the first wave of commotion, will make it reel and totter ... The spirit of the church, and the spirit of the nation, grows worse and worse. The times are both perilous and evil. This city is the place in which the church will have to abide a fearful struggle, by the enemies of Christ.¹⁵²

By the time he published *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Six Sermons*, criticism of Irving's ideas on the person of Christ was widespread not only in English religious society but also in the Church of Scotland. Irving recognised that 'the incarnation of the Son of God is the ground and basis of all real knowledge with respect to the Godhead'.¹⁵³ In its preface he clarified his doctrine of the Incarnation.

The point at issue is simply this: Whether Christ's flesh had the grace of sinlessness and incorruption from its proper nature, or from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. I say the latter. I assert, that in its proper nature it was as the flesh of His mother, but, by virtue of the Holy Ghost's quickening and inhabiting of it, it was preserved sinless and incorruptible.¹⁵⁴

Irving believed that the Saviour must have had the same humanity as we have.¹⁵⁵ He maintained that it was only through the nature that Christ shared with humanity, that the

¹⁵² Irving, *The Last Days: A Discourse on the Evil Character of These our Times: Proving Them to be the 'Perilous Times' of the 'Last Days'*, xii – xiii.

¹⁵³ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 398.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁵ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic* vii, 150; Irving suggested the Biblical sources on this as Gal. 3:13, Rom. 8:3, 2 Cor. 5:21.

Godhead was made known and through which man and God could be reconciled.¹⁵⁶ By emptying himself and taking on the limitations of a creature, Christ was able to bring himself into communication with the wickedness of this world; ‘The *humiliation* was the sacrifice; the *becoming* man, the *being made flesh*,’ which was with the ‘fullness of the Godhead’s manifestation in Him bodily.’¹⁵⁷

That Christ had the same humanity as believers meant, for Irving, that He had the same ‘corruptible’ or ‘sinful’ flesh as human beings’. This commonness between Christ and humanity included Christ’s experiences of not only birth and death but also of temptation. Without this ‘sinful flesh’, in Irving’s view, Christ’s temptation was not real, and neither could he have healed, reconciled and redeemed human beings. Christ willingly assumed the fallen human nature, and came under the curse of sin and death to redeem believers.¹⁵⁸ There could, according to Irving, be no real sympathy without this full identification with humanity’s sinfulness.

The temptations of Christ have great significance in Irving’s soteriology. According to Irving, Christ ‘did ever resist and reject the suggestions of evil’¹⁵⁹ with his ‘natural mortal and corruptive flesh’¹⁶⁰ which was ‘all-labile to sin’.¹⁶¹ In this real temptation in mediatorial action the Redeemer became ‘very man liable to human reason, as well as to human sense and human suffering’.¹⁶² The devil could approach Christ and test Him because He possessed a real human nature that was liable to sin. For Christ it was ‘real’ temptation, because, Irving claimed, ‘no one can truly be tempted or tried, unless he is liable to sin’.¹⁶³

In spite of this ‘all-liability to sin’, however, Christ did not commit any actual sin. Irving held that the substance of the human nature assumed by Christ had an inclination to

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵⁷ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in CW, V, 270.

¹⁵⁸ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 43.

¹⁵⁹ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in CW, V, 126.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 115; *Orthodox and Catholic*, 20.

¹⁶¹ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in CW, V, 139.

¹⁶² Irving, *John the Baptist* in CW, II, 101.

¹⁶³ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in CW, V, 159.

sin but was kept ever sinless in His person; He was preserved from sin by the influence of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁴ The work of the Holy Spirit prevented Christ from submitting to the corruption of sin and kept him clean from any blot, thus preserving his status as a redeemer. The role of the Holy Spirit in Christ's earthly ministry was to keep Him from corruption; 'I have the Holy Ghost manifested in subduing, restraining, conquering the evil properties of the fallen manhood, and making it an apt organ for expressing the will of the Father.'¹⁶⁵

B.1.b. Theology in Conflict

Worldly Reaction

Many contemporary church leaders and theologians expressed strong opposition to Irving's ideas. Early nineteenth-century Scottish Presbyterians, whose theological focus was on Christ's mediatorial role and propitiatory sacrifice rather than on the classical hypostatic union, could not accept Irving's Christology. Irving claimed that Christ's body was kept holy in the incarnation by the work of the Holy Spirit and that He was holy in person, but still remaining in a 'sinful' state which containing the possibility of corruption. Irving's idea of Christ's sinful flesh was regarded as a confusing one and was not really understood by his contemporaries. In considering this opposition, we begin with the ideas of the Rev. Henry Cole, whose arguments against Irving's Christology were adopted by other opponents of Irving.¹⁶⁶

Henry Cole believed that Christ's body was 'a sacred, mysterious, and glorious something, distinctly different from all the bodies of the fallen human race'.¹⁶⁷ For Cole,

¹⁶⁴ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 170.

¹⁶⁶ There were many contemporary opponents of Irving's Christology, like Henry Cole, James A Haldane, Andrew Thomson, Marcus Dods, John Wilson, and John Stevens. We should note that they showed almost similar opinions to the Rev. Henry Cole, who first unfolded his ideas attacking Irving.

¹⁶⁷ Henry Cole, *The True Signification of the English Adjective Mortal, and the Awfully Erroneous Consequences of the Application of that Term to the Ever Immortal Body of Jesus Christ, Briefly Considered* (London: J. Eedes, 1827), 21. According to D. Dorries, it was interesting and

anyone who was mortal was also a sinner; however, only immortality and sinlessness were characteristics of Christ's body. 'The Redeemer's adorably immortal human nature', Cole asserted, could not 'be brought down to a sin-like level, both in his life and his death, with the bodies of the fallen race whom he came to redeem'.¹⁶⁸ This view was fundamentally opposed to that of Irving, who thought that 'the Word himself took the form of man; he made himself human, took upon himself a body like ours'. After briefly visiting Irving in order to confirm his understanding of Irving's position, Cole published an open letter to Irving concerning 'the mortality of the human nature of Jesus Christ', in which he condemned Irving's position as heretical. Since Irving applied the terms 'sinless', 'undefiled', and 'mortal' to Christ, Cole insisted that Irving's view of Christ was 'a flat self-contradiction and a palpable absurdity'.¹⁶⁹ For Cole, it was only because Christ was not sinful and mortal, but rather had an inherently immaculate humanity, that He could offer Himself as the sin-atonement Lamb of God.¹⁷⁰ Irving's Christ, who had a 'sinful and corruptible body, which was the same as that of the Rev. Edward Irving' could not, Cole insisted, be so offered.¹⁷¹

coincidental that just before the Rev. Cole heard of Irving's position on the humanity of Christ, he had already published this tract, with its purpose to declare the purity and freedom from all mortality of Christ's body- 'ever adorably immortal' (Ibid., 5). After he heard about Irving's claim about the 'sinfulness' of Christ's body, he felt the investigation of this matter would be his duty. See David William Dorries, 'Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy, Centering Upon Edward Irving's Doctrine of Christ's Human Nature' (PhD Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1987), 352.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 27f.

¹⁶⁹ Henry Cole, *Letter to The Rev. Edward Irving in Refutation of the Awful Doctrines (Held by Him) of the Sinfulness, Mortality, and Corruptibility of the Body of Jesus Christ* (London: [s.n.], 1827), 12.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 67.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 66. In most biographical sketches, Henry Cole is described as visiting Irving and did not have sufficient conversation about their opinions of the incarnation and hastily published the booklet *Letter to The Rev. Edward Irving*. Irving also testified to this that Cole published the booklet 'without ever asking whether it was correctly reported or not'. Cole was also confused in his reference to the location of Irving's church when he referred to 'Caledonian Chapel, Compton-street', because the congregation had moved from Hatton Garden to Regent Square in May 1827. According to Irving, Cole had separated himself from the Church of England. See, the preface of *Christ's Holiness in Flesh, The Form, Fountain Head, and Assurance to us of Holiness in Flesh. In Three Parts*.

James Haldane

Irving's fame in London and the news of the accident at the church of Kirkcaldy drew the attention of the Rev. James A. Haldane (1768-1851), a noted Scottish Independent, and later Baptist, church leader.¹⁷² After hearing of Irving's contentious views on Christ's humanity, he happened to dine with Irving. During the meal, Irving maintained that his view rested on the scriptural description of Christ as 'being tempted in all things as a man', to which Haldane responded that 'the prince of this world found nothing in him, no lust on which his temptation could operate'.¹⁷³

After reading Cole's tract, Haldane joined Irving's opponents, publishing in 1829 the *Refutation of the Heretical Doctrine Promulgated by the Rev. Edward Irving: Respecting the Person and Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Haldane asserted his view on the human nature of Christ against those who 'have erred by imagining they had discovered a method bringing down the great mystery of godliness'.¹⁷⁴ He believed that Christ's manhood was not mortal because this would have made Him a sinner and invalidated His atoning work. Since the Saviour's 'human nature was prepared by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost, he was therefore holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, as the east from the west, as light from darkness'.¹⁷⁵

His holy human nature is the model or pattern of the holy nature, which all his people derive from him, by which they are capable of enjoying communion with God; as the corrupt nature of fallen Adam is the model of the corrupt nature of all his posterity, by which they maintain communion with Satan.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² One Sunday evening, in the summer of 1828, people gathered in a Kirkcaldy church for Irving's visiting sermon. While they were waiting, the over-crowded galleries collapsed. According to Chalmers' wife, who was present, at least thirty-five people were killed in the accident. Irving blamed himself for this tragedy.

¹⁷³ Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of His Brother, James Alexander Haldane* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1853), 567.

¹⁷⁴ James A. Haldane, *Refutation of the Heretical Doctrine Promulgated by the Rev. Edward Irving: Respecting the Person and Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1829), 2.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

Haldane's conviction that 'where there is sin there must be mortality, for the wages of sin is death' drove him to reject the notion of Christ's 'sinful flesh' which, he thought, would mean that Christ's death was not a voluntary one.¹⁷⁷ Haldane, however, did not comprehend fully Irving's idea of 'Christ's sinful flesh'.¹⁷⁸ Irving's view, Haldane claimed, would make Christ a partaker of original sin who would require regeneration.¹⁷⁹ However, Irving never claimed that Christ had original sin.¹⁸⁰

Andrew Thomson

Andrew Thomson was one of the most influential evangelical pastors in Edinburgh and editor of *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* for its first twenty years. He had earlier helped Irving's career by arranging a trial sermon in front of Dr. Chalmers, which had led to Irving's appointment as an assistant to Chalmers at St John's. When Irving was in Edinburgh to preach in May 1829, Thomson met with Irving and the two men discussed Irving's doctrinal views for over an hour. Thomson also defended Irving's right to attend the General Assembly when Irving's commission was challenged.¹⁸¹ However, he could not defend Irving's doctrinal position, and he wrongly believed that Irving's writings portrayed Christ's moral corruptibility.

In his *Sermons on Various Subjects*, Thomson argued that Christ's body was nothing more than 'the likeness of sinful flesh'.¹⁸² According to him, human nature was not corrupt

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 36.

¹⁷⁸ In his account of Irving's idea that Christ was in all points tempted as we are, Haldane seems to have lost track of his own argument. Sometimes he supports Irving's argument. See *Refutation*, page 11 to 18.

¹⁷⁹ James A. Haldane, *Refutation of the Heretical Doctrine Promulgated by the Rev. Edward Irving*, 33.

¹⁸⁰ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 587; Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 25, 85; Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 37, 140.; Irving, 'On the True Humanity of Christ', *MW*, II (1829), 116.; E. Irving and T. Carlyle, *The Doctrine Held by the Church of Scotland Concerning the Human Nature of Our Lord, As Stated in Her Standards* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1830), 32. Throughout Irving's works, he repeatedly claimed Christ's sinlessness.

¹⁸¹ Irving's letter to his wife dated 19 May 1829, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 79.

¹⁸² Andrew Thomson, *Sermons on Various Subjects* (Edinburgh: William Whyte, 1829), 541.

in its original state, but became totally corrupt in its present state.¹⁸³ Thomson believed that Christ did not take a human body which can be ‘found every where among the children of men’ but that a special body was prepared for him under ‘peculiar circumstances’, which kept his body free from moral pollution.¹⁸⁴ The human nature which Christ took was not that of any one man, but ‘as the representative of all men, which he entered into, and by his union with which’, he became ‘God and man in one person’.¹⁸⁵ The infirmities, pains, and sorrows which beset Christ during his humiliation, Thomson claimed, accounted for the fact that ‘he not only took upon him our transgressions, or had them imputed to him ... but that he assumed our nature for the express purpose of becoming a sacrifice or sin-offering’.¹⁸⁶ During his temptation Christ had been invulnerable to temptation, and remained free from the moral evil derived from the fall. Thomson denounced any notion

That the Son of God dwelt in the human nature, “all evil,” “sinful,” “fallen,” and exerted this power to accomplish its purification, operating mightily for that end, and finally succeeding in his purpose. This is altogether inconsistent with the doctrine contained in those church formularies with some of these gentlemen have discovered of late to be so sound and essential, that no parent is a real Christian who does not inculcate them on his children.¹⁸⁷

Irving’s interpretation of the biblical adjective ‘likeness’ was different from that of Thomson. Irving held that this word was introduced ‘not to deny the verity of his flesh of sin, but to preserve the verity of his Godhead, when he became manifested as flesh of sin’.¹⁸⁸ In Philippians 2: 7, the same word ‘likeness’ was used in describing Christ’s becoming Man: ‘He was made in the likeness of man’. For Irving, anyone claiming that this word did not mean reality, but only the appearance or similitude, would be denying the reality of Christ’s manhood.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ Ibid., 541.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 541, 544.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 543.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 542.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 544.

¹⁸⁸ Irving, ‘On the Human Nature of Christ’, *MW*, I (1829), 95.

¹⁸⁹ Irving interpreted the word ‘likeness’ in the same manner in *Orthodox*, 12.

Irving insisted that Christ's depiction of himself as 'the Prince of world this cometh, and hath nothing in me' proved that Christ retained his sinlessness through his perfect faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. But, on the other hand, for Thomson, this verse was not consistent with the adjective of 'sinful', 'evil', and 'fallen' in describing the body of Christ.¹⁹⁰ As D. Dorries has argued, 'Thomson was so blindly convinced that fallen flesh implied moral corruption, that he was willing to sacrifice Christ's consubstantial identification with common humanity in order to protect Him from the possibility of moral sin'.¹⁹¹

Henry Drummond

The successive critiques of Irving by Haldane and Thomson were answered by the political economist, politician and Anglican lay theologian, Henry Drummond (1786 – 1860). Drummond had become close with Irving through their work for the Continental Society and participation in the Albury Park meetings, and he would later become one of the founders of the Catholic Apostolic Church. In his tract, *Candid Examination of the Controversy between Messrs. Irving, A. Thomson, and J. Haldane, respecting the Human Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ*, Drummond maintained that

Sinful flesh is not the flesh of a sinner, but flesh which, asking gratification, tempts the wearer to sin; and this flesh is what Mr. H. and Dr. T. deny that Christ took, and which all the orthodox affirm that he took ... "The Son of God did assume our nature, with all its infirmities, and became subject to the common frailty and infirmity of our nature."¹⁹²

Haldane and Thomson, Henry Drummond continued, attempted to 'establish [that] the human nature of Christ [as] a special, underived holiness' impinged upon the authenticity of His humanity, while Irving's position rested on Christ's 'moral purity in His perfect

¹⁹⁰ Andrew Thomson, *Sermons on Various Subjects*, 546.

¹⁹¹ Dorries, 'Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy', 389.

¹⁹² Henry Drummond, *Candid Examination of the Controversy between Messrs. Irving, A. Thomson, and J. Haldane, respecting the Human Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ* (London: James Nisbet, 1829), 32.

obedience to the Father through the Spirit's assistance'.¹⁹³ Drummond even transferred the term of 'heresy' from Irving to Haldane and Thomson, regarded their ideas as 'a branch of the Eutychian, or Monophysite'.¹⁹⁴

Drummond's strong advocacy of Irving evoked a public exchange with Haldane.¹⁹⁵ From Haldane's point of view, Irving made Christ 'a man emptied of the divinity', while Irving never affirmed the Son's abdication of His deity.¹⁹⁶ Drummond pointed out that the word 'sinful' should be understood by the 'passive state' of sinfulness in Christ's human nature, not as an 'active state', and he criticized Haldane for his failing to recognise the distinction between the two:

If the term be used, it should be made clearly to appear that it is used to predicate the property of a substance, and not the disposition of a person: i.e. that it implies no inclination, or disposition, in an active sense.¹⁹⁷

For Irving's opponents, Drummond's tract was regarded as 'a diversion in favour of his friend', and as 'splitting hairs in metaphysics'. According to James Haldane's son, Alexander Haldane, Drummond 'did not always distinguish between essential truth and the

¹⁹³ Dorries, 'Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy', 392f.

¹⁹⁴ H. Drummond, *Candid Examination*, 54.

¹⁹⁵ In response to Henry Drummond's *Candid Examination*, James Haldane wrote an *Answer to Mr. Henry Drummond's Defence of the Heretical Doctrine Promulgated by Mr. Irving, Respecting the person and Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1830). When Drummond defended himself against Haldane's *Answer* in a *Supplement to the Candid Examination of the Controversy between Messrs. Irving, A. Thomson, and J. Haldane, respecting the Human Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ* (London: James Nisbet, 1830), Haldane attacked again with a *Reply to Mr. Henry Drummond's Supplement to the Candid Examination Controversy respecting the Human Nature of Christ: Demonstrating His Failure in Defending His Misquotations, and Exposing the Unfairness of His Mode of Conducting the Discussion* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1830).

¹⁹⁶ James Haldane, *Reply to Mr. Henry Drummond's Supplement to the Candid Examination Controversy*, 40.

¹⁹⁷ Henry Drummond, *Supplement to the Candid Examination of the Controversy*, 54. Drummond's choice of words in describing Irving's idea of 'sinful flesh' is not completely the same as Irving's. The 'active state' of Christ's sinful flesh, in Drummond's text, can be regarded as the real or actual participation in sin, which Irving had not attributed to the humanity of Christ.

errors grafted on it by human fancy, between “the deep things of God” and the false and deceitful lights which emanate from “the depths of Satan”’.¹⁹⁸

Marcus Dods

Another major critic of Irving’s Christology was the Rev. Marcus Dods, Presbyterian minister at Belford, in Northumberland, who in 1830 condemned Irving’s views as having of Nestorian tendencies in the pages of *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*.¹⁹⁹ Dods could not agree with Irving’s view of ‘Christ’s sinful flesh, but His sinlessness by the Spirit’s sanctifying work’ because for Dods even the slightest propensity to sin in Christ’s humanity would have been equivalent to actual transgression. ‘Even the slightest propensity or inclination to sin’, he wrote, ‘is required to be repressed in order to prevent it from proceeding to actual guilt’, while ‘this propensity was itself, at least in our view of the matter, criminal, and effectually disqualified him for giving any practical revelation of the divine holiness in his life’.²⁰⁰ If Christ had a propensity or inclination to sin, even ‘if so powerfully and successfully repressed’, the claim that He “knew no sin” was beyond our comprehension’.²⁰¹ In his subsequent voluminous work on the doctrine of the incarnation, Dods insisted ‘that the “Word was made flesh” and he was not made sinful flesh, are propositions which lie at the very foundation of Christianity’.²⁰² For him, ‘sinful’ is synonymous with ‘peccable’. Since Dods believed that ‘Christ was not fallen nor sinful, nor

¹⁹⁸ Haldane, *The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of His Brother, James Alexander Haldane*, 568.

¹⁹⁹ Marcus Dods contributed a lengthy ‘Review of Publications on Christ’s Human Nature’ in the issues of January, February, and March in 1830 of *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*. It dealt with *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* by Irving, *The Morning Watch* by various authors, *Candid Examination of the Controversy between Messrs. Irving, A. Thomson, and J. Haldane, respecting the Human Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ* by a Layman [H. Drummond], and *The Word Made Flesh: or the true humanity of God in Christ demonstrated from the Scriptures* by Carlyle. The Rev. Marcus Dods was the editor of *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* for five years, and, before Dods, Dr Andrew Thomson had edited this journal for twenty years. *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* was first published August 1810 with Andrew Thomson’s editorial work, published throughout Scotland with its main contents of ‘Review of new publications’ and ‘List of new publications’, until its last issue in December 1840.

²⁰⁰ *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, 29, (January, 1830), 46.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Marcus Dods, *On the Incarnation of the Eternal Word* (London: R. B. Seeley, 1831), vii.

capable of falling or sinning', only the inherent holiness of human nature could be compatible with Christ.²⁰³ Thus, he claimed, Irving's notion of 'sinful nature' could not be applied to our Redeemer.

After reading Dods' refutation, Irving penned a letter to him explaining his position on the human nature of Christ; 'With respect to the experience of the Son of God in our nature, I am content to say that He was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet never sinned'.²⁰⁴ Irving's suggestion that Dods meet with him on his next visit to London was not accepted.

John Stevens

John Stevens, an English clergyman, criticised Irving in a pamphlet entitled *The Sinlessness of Jesus*, in which he maintained that Christ's pre-incarnate, heavenly soul could not be associated with sinful contamination. According to him, Christ's pre-incarnate and immortal soul was united to Mary's body, so that He was holy and impeccable.²⁰⁵ 'As Christ was a heavenly Man before he tabernacled on earth, so he was a perfectly sinless and holy one' in that 'the sinlessness of his soul, from its pre-existence and union to the divine nature hypostatically'.²⁰⁶ With his idea of the 'immutable holiness of the Glory-Man', Stevens viewed Irving's portrayal of Christ as combining both 'the sinfulness and devil-mindedness of the Man Christ Jesus'.²⁰⁷

B.1.c. Doctrinal Authenticity in Confessions

Irving's plan to publish *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* was postponed due to Cole's accusation. He did, however, preach a Fast-day sermon before the Presbytery of London in the spring of 1828, and this was published under the title *An Apology for the*

²⁰³ Ibid., 2.

²⁰⁴ Irving's letter to the Rev. Marcus Dods, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 114.

²⁰⁵ John Stevens, *The Sinlessness of Jesus* (London: Nichols and Sons, 1830), 38.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 15, 26.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 104.

Ancient Fulness and Purity of the Doctrine of the Kirk of Scotland. In this work, he appealed to the Confessions of the Scottish Church, and insisted that it was his duty to honour these Confessions to the point of martyrdom, saying, 'I do battle under the standards of the Church under which my fathers fell ... I am a man sworn to discipline, and must abide by my standard, and may not leave it, but fall beside it, or fall above it, and yield to it the last shelter and rampart of my fallen body'.²⁰⁸

Irving believed that his views on Christ's human flesh were supported by the Reformers' teachings on Baptism and the Lord's Supper. True believers can receive the Holy Spirit as symbolised in Baptism, and receive the grace of God through communion with Christ's risen body as signified in the Lord's Supper.²⁰⁹ The work of the Spirit in the life of 'Christ in a sinful form' was manifested by the Spirit's power to bring the holy out of the unholy. Christ was the great exemplar of the spiritual man. However, these ideas were, he maintained, seldom presented as the work of the Spirit upon mortal flesh.²¹⁰ He placed his emphasis on the Scottish Confessions of the Church, instead of the Westminster Confession of Faith (the legal standard of faith in the Church of Scotland).²¹¹ Irving claimed that his view of Christ's humanity was exactly that described in the Scots Confession of Faith of 1560, particularly the section entitled 'Of the Sacraments'.

the bread which we break is the communion of Christ's body, and the cup which we bless is the communion of his blood. So that we confess, and undoubtedly believe, that the faithful, in the right use of the Lord's Table, so do eat the body, and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus, that He remaineth in them and they in Him: yea, that they are so made flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones, that as the Eternal Godhead hath given to the flesh of Christ Jesus (which of its own condition and nature was mortal and corruptible) life and immortality, so doth Christ Jesus his flesh and blood eaten and drunken by us, give to us the same prerogatives.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 12f.

²⁰⁹ E. Irving, *An Apology for the Ancient Fulness and Purity of the Doctrine of the Kirk of Scotland* (London: James Nisbet, 1828), 13.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

²¹¹ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 3.

²¹² *The Scots Confession of Faith of 1560*, Chapter 21. 'Of the Sacraments'.

Irving also defended his doctrinal orthodoxy by citing several Confessions and a ‘copious selection of short extracts from nearly all the Fathers, Reformers, and Commentators of note’ in an article ‘On the Human Nature of Christ’ in the first edition of *Morning Watch*.²¹³ But his final defence was always based on Scripture.

In 1830, the Rev. Hugh Baillie McLean was brought to trial for heterodox teachings about Christ’s peccability, first before the Presbytery of Irvine and then before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. Irving wrote two tracts in support of McLean: one was written jointly with T. Carlyle, who was McLean’s advocate, and entitled *The Doctrine Held by the Church of Scotland Concerning the Human Nature of Our Lord, As Stated in Her Standards*; the other was *The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord’s Human Nature, Tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith*. In these two tracts, Irving tried to show that the idea of Christ’s sinful flesh (or Christ’s peccability) was in line with the Confessions. (His advocacy did not save McLean, who was deposed from the Church of Scotland ministry by the General Assembly in 1831.)

Concerning the place of the Westminster Confession in the Church of Scotland, Irving explained that it had been adopted by the General Assembly in 1645 on condition that the Confession contained ‘NOTHING contrary to the received DOCTRINE, worship, discipline, and government of this Kirk’. According to Irving, the Westminster Confession was introduced not ‘as a better confession or sounder faith’, but as ‘the bond of uniformity’, embraced without ‘removing our [Scottish] old standards’.²¹⁴ Therefore he claimed that

²¹³ E. Irving, ‘On the Human Nature of Christ’, *MW*, I (1829), 76. Irving refers to the English Confession of Faith; *Notes to Baker’s Bible*, 1608; *The Scots Confession of Faith*; *Calvin’s Catechism*; *The Palatine Catechism*; *The Helvetic Confession*, 1566; *The Belgic Confession*; *Hooker’s Ecclesiastical Polity*; *Sermons on the Incarnation*, by John (Sancroft), Archbishop of Canterbury, 1679; *Jewell, Apology*, 1562; *The Gallican Confession*, 1561-1566; *Confessio Ecclesiarum Gallicarum*, 1562; *Calvin against Menno*; *Gelasius*; *Tertullian de Carne Christi*; *Athanasius contra Arrian*; *Chrysostom in 1 Tim. Hom. VI*; *Ambrose on Heb. ii.14*; *Jerome on Rom. vii*; *Augustine*; *Hilary*; *Justin Martyr*; *Lombard, Magister Sententiarum*; *Leo Primis*; *Daniel Heinsius*; *Basilius Seleuciaie Episcopus*; *Beza*; *Vatablus*; *Clarius*; *Zeger*; *Castalio*.

²¹⁴ E. Irving and T. Carlyle, *The Doctrine Held by the Church of Scotland Concerning the Human Nature of Our Lord, As Stated in Her Standards*, 9.

‘while the Westminster Confession and Catechisms are the ostensible and acknowledged standards of our Church, our ancient standards still constitute our ultimate ecclesiastical authority’.²¹⁵

Irving placed particular emphasis on chapter viii of the Scottish Confession, which stated of the human nature of Christ: ‘Because that the enmity between the justice of God and our sins was such that no flesh by itself could or might have attained unto God, it behoved that the Son of God should descend unto us, and take himself a body of our body, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bones, and so become the perfect Mediator between God and man’. This led Irving to maintain that Christ ‘took, without original or actual sin, the fallen and infirm nature of sinful persons, by hypostasis under his divine person, through conception of the Holy Spirit’.²¹⁶

Irving also believed that his interpretation was not contrary to the spirit of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Here he appealed to chapter viii, ‘Of Christ the Mediator’,²¹⁷ and claimed that this chapter supported his stance. For Irving, the focal point was the continuous work of the Holy Spirit in both Christ’s life and common believers; ‘The Son of God become the Son of Man, that is, the will of the Godhead acting in the limits of a human will, uses the Holy Ghost, condescending with the like lowliness, and by the Holy Ghost in his conception, and from his conception, puts power of perfect holiness into the members of a mortal, corruptible, weak, dishonourable body’.²¹⁸

Although Irving expressed his preference for the sixteenth-century Scots Confession rather than the Westminster Confession, he insisted that his views were consistent with both

²¹⁵ Ibid., 10.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 32.

²¹⁷ ‘The Lord Jesus in his human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure; having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell: to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a Mediator and Surety: which office he took not unto himself, but was thereunto called by his Father, who put all power and judgment into his hand.’

²¹⁸ E. Irving, *The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord’s Human Nature, Tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1830), 44.

of them. He argued that ‘the Westminster Confession exactly coincided with all the symbols of doctrine’ substantiating his views.²¹⁹

B.1.d. Godhead’s Love in ‘Sinful Flesh’

Despite the strong opposition, Irving conveyed his ideas of Christ’s humanity in several published works. He stressed that it was a genuine humanity, and not an altered or a divinized one, which Christ took from the Virgin Mary. Christ’s humanity was not, as his opponents seemed to argue, immortal, incorruptible, inherently holy and immutable.²²⁰

Rather, Irving believed that Christ had assumed fallen human nature, the same as ours, and that Christ’s temptations and experiences were like our own. Irving also believed that Christ was without actual sin because He maintained a condition of perfect moral obedience to the will of God the Father through the ministry of the Spirit. For Irving the rejection of the view that Christ took on our fallen human flesh, which is really sinful flesh, would incur a devaluation of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Irving’s Firm Position in *Orthodox and Catholic*

In January 1830, Irving published the *Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord’s Human Nature*, to clarify his position and defending his orthodoxy against his critics. This work also contains an account of the unlimited love of the Godhead for all humanity, as illustrated through Christ’s real suffering through his sinful flesh. This book, Irving’s strongest statement of his position, would later become evidence for the prosecution in Irving’s trial for heresy before the London and Annan Presbyteries.

From Irving’s point of view, the incarnation formed the vital union between God and Man; God condescended to assume the body of flesh, and did not lose His holiness, but, at

²¹⁹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 50.

²²⁰ Henry Cole, *The true signification*, 11, 21, 27, 28; Henry Cole, *Letter to The Rev. Edward Irving*, 66, 67; John Stevens, *The Sinlessness of Jesus*, 15, 26, 38.

the same time, he also acquired the same humanity as we have.²²¹ God's incarnation into this world was the revelation of himself to his creatures. Irving thought it was the revelation of his love, which made an intimate relationship between the Creator and creatures possible.²²²

That the infinite God, who is also invisible and incomprehensible, cannot communicate himself, or the knowledge of himself, unto his creatures, without assuming to himself a finite form.²²³

For Irving, Christ was the Godhead's manifestation of the threefold work of the Trinity. It was the product of the co-work between the will of the Father, the Son's unity with humanity and the Spirit's strong manifestation against evil which acted harmoniously in the Triune Godhead.

My Christ is the Trinity manifested; not merely the Trinity told of, but the Trinity manifested. I have the Father manifested in every thing that he doth; for he did not his own will, but the will of his Father. I have the Son manifested in uniting his Divinity to a humanity prepared for him by the Father, and in making the two most contrary things to meet and kiss each other, in all the actings of his widest, most comprehensive being. I have the Holy Ghost manifested in subduing, restraining, conquering the evil propensities of the fallen manhood, and making it an apt organ for expressing the will of the Father; a fit and holy substance to enter into personal union with the untempted and untemptable Godhead.²²⁴

In his portrayal of the Incarnation, Irving showed the dynamic involvement of the three persons of the Trinity in the Godhead's intelligible manifestation.²²⁵ In Irving's understanding of the Godhead's manifestation in Christ, the active work of the Holy Spirit was in its centre.

Now every act of Holy Ghost is an act of the Father and the Son, from whom the Holy Ghost proceedeth. The Holy Ghost worketh nothing of Himself, but worketh the common pleasure of the Father and the Son. In the creation, therefore, of this body of

²²¹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 85, 151.

²²² *Ibid.*, 98.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 59f.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

Christ of the woman's substance, there is an act of the Father's will and a word of the Son asserting thereto.²²⁶

In Irving's belief, as we have seen, Christ's humanity had the same sinful or corruptible propensities as that of all other men and women. The eternal Godhead, who wanted to extirpate sin and death from flesh, took part with the flesh and blood of fallen children.²²⁷ Nothing but the same fallen nature could bring about the effective work of harmonizing human beings with the Godhead. At the same time, the work of the Holy Spirit provided the safeguard against the possibility of Christ committing any actual sin during His earthly life. Irving rejected two other opinions about the nature of Christ's body: one that 'Christ's body was neither mortal nor corruptible, and his holiness was inherent in his human nature', and the other that the substance of Christ's body was the virgin's, but was subsequently changed into a new substance.²²⁸ If Christ's flesh was changed at the moment of conception or generation, Irving argued, He was not tempted in all points in the same manner as common believers. Christ's life could not be a prototype of the Holy Ghost's power over sinful flesh and it would make all the gospel accounts a mere appearance and not a reality.²²⁹

The flesh he took underwent no change in its composition, in its life, or in its death, but in its resurrection it was altogether changed; and by this oneness of flesh and blood with us, he was one with us in all our temptations, in all our limitations, in all our humiliations. But he was not one with us in sin; he was one with God in holiness.²³⁰

Christ's being with true humanity, for Irving, was an essential part of His performing salvific work as a Mediator, and sharing the sufferings of humanity. Irving claimed that 'the Godhead cannot suffer because it cannot change', but in the case of Christ, 'those sufferings

²²⁶ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 122.

²²⁷ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 74.

²²⁸ Irving, *The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord's Human Nature, Tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3-8.

²²⁹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 27f.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 66f

which He underwent reached him through his creature part'.²³¹ Since suffering and death were the signs and wages of the Fall, they affected the creaturely part which was the body. If Christ's body did not have a 'sinful nature', His suffering was not real, and thus could have no real effect on His redemptive work, claimed Irving. He put a question to his opponents: 'I ask then, how became his flesh capable of suffering if it was not flesh under the Fall, or how became it capable of dying?'²³² If the unfallen creature can suffer, as his opponents claimed, Irving thought that 'there is no difference between the unfallen and the fallen, for suffering and death are the signs and wages of the Fall'.²³³ On this matter, though, Irving's opponents claimed that it was for the sins of others by imputation; however, Irving could not agree since there was no way to attribute suffering to an unfallen creature. Just as suffering can come to a fallen creature without any sinful act (as in the case of a newborn baby), so Christ could suffer and die in a fallen nature.²³⁴ Irving pointed out that his opponents' root of error was 'in mistaking Christ's human nature for his person, or supposing it to be another person', thereby making two persons in him, instead of two natures in one person.²³⁵

Only by entering into our condition as sinners, could Christ show His love, grace, and mercy. Otherwise, He would not have identified with us: 'When Christ took human nature he took it fallen, with all its ills, with all its griefs, with all its darkness, with all its wretchedness, with all its punishments; the complete orb of its action and its passion took he, all-inclusive, all-continent; of free-will, asking no favour, preferring the worst, that to the worst his Father's grace and love might be manifested: all this he did, and in all this consisteth his humiliation and his suffering'.²³⁶

²³¹ Ibid., 73.

²³² Ibid., 71.

²³³ Ibid., 73.

²³⁴ Ibid., 73.

²³⁵ Ibid., 28, 44.

²³⁶ Ibid., 98.

B.2. The ‘Sinful Flesh’ under Temptation

If Christ was kept holy – and thus kept separate from fallen humanity – by the work of the Holy Spirit, what was the distinction between his ‘human nature’ and ‘sinful flesh’ in Irving’s mind?²³⁷ Human nature could have had limitations when it co-existed with the divine nature in Christ.²³⁸ In Irving’s terms, ‘sinful nature’ or ‘sinful flesh’ meant having a proclivity to sin.²³⁹ This proclivity was the stumbling-block which human beings could not overcome by the efforts of their human nature. Indeed, in Irving’s understanding, this was also true of Christ himself. However, Christ was upheld and enabled to resist sin by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, which enabled Him to have ‘perfect faith’²⁴⁰ in the Father.

B.2.a. Christ’s Perfect Faith

At this stage we have at least two subjects to consider concerning the logic of Irving’s view. The first relates to the ‘perfect faith’ of Christ, which bound His soul from going astray through normal human fallibility. While Irving designated Christ’s faith as ‘perfect’, he called that of simple believers ‘imperfect’. Although Christ and believers are brethren (Heb. 2:11), there was, for Irving, a superiority in Christ’s faith in the Father compared with human

²³⁷ On this question, it would be useful to consider the relationship between ‘human nature’ and ‘flesh’ or ‘body’. Irving observed in his *Orthodox and Catholic* that ‘flesh is the region of humanity, the bound and compass which God hath fixed for the definition of his creature man; not the body alone, nor the reasonable soul alone; but the body and the soul or spirit, the visible and the invisible parts of man, subsisting in union with one another’. Here, Irving understood ‘flesh’ as the body that contains all components of the Person; at the same time, he shows the propensity of this word as being applicable to external appearances. In this respect, in Irving’s works, ‘flesh’ can be understood as a medium through which the characteristics of ‘human nature’ are expressed.

²³⁸ My intention is not to deny the perfect property of the human nature of Christ. However, I would like to explore the sinlessness or spotlessness of Christ, in Irving’s understanding that Christ’s human nature was exactly the same as the believer’s.

²³⁹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 2, 152.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vii, 31; Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 11; Irving, *The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord’s Human Nature, Tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith*, 4.

faith in God – His was ‘perfect’ and that of ordinary humans was ‘imperfect’.²⁴¹ In the case of Christ, His sinful nature was kept sinless by his ‘perfect faith’ in the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit in His earthly life. In the case of ordinary men and women, they cannot be sinless, even though they have faith in God and the Holy Spirit is working in them, because their faith is not ‘perfect’ like that of Christ.

Irving explained that all flesh in this world was under sin. According to him, there were three modes in which flesh existed or would exist: the first was the flesh of Adam before the Fall – in the prelapsarian state; the second was that after the Fall; and the third was that to come in the resurrection which would be immortal and spiritual. All human flesh in this world belonged to the second category, according to both Scripture and the church tradition, and the body of Christ was also in the same mode.²⁴² The work of the Holy Spirit was also commonly applied to both Christ and believers. After His baptism in the Jordan, the life of Christ was full of the power of the Holy Spirit. In the same manner the life of ordinary believers was also lived in the power of the Holy Spirit after their regeneration. But this indwelling power of the Spirit did not change either Christ’s body or that of believers; ‘As a man’s nature after regeneration is the same sinful nature as before, though restrained from power by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, so was Christ’s substance after his generation of the Holy Ghost, the same as before, very substance of his mother, without change or alteration ... a true body and a reasonable soul’.²⁴³ Every believer needs daily repentance of their sins due to the weakness of the flesh. With human flesh and the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ kept his life sinless, while ordinary believers cannot. In keeping his life sinless, according to Irving, the only difference between Christ and human beings was His perfect faith.

²⁴¹ When he described Christ’s complete moral obedience to the will of Father, Irving applied the word ‘perfect faith’ to Christ, and this seems to have been operative in Christ’s divine nature and by the work of the Holy Spirit.

²⁴² Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 51.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

In Christ, this work was perfect through the perfectness of his faith; in us, it is imperfect, through the imperfectness of our faith. We have therefore reason to confess a continual sin, which he had never reason to confess in himself and of himself, but only through imputation from others, for in himself and of himself he had only to rejoice in a continual victory, saying evermore, “Yet not my will, but thine be done.”²⁴⁴

Can we then leave this matter simply with the idea that Christ – the Son of Man – is different from human beings because he has a divine nature? We could answer this question by referring to the doctrine of Christ’s two natures – of the hypostatic union – which enabled Him to have perfect faith in the Father. Christ’s perfect faith in the Father was guaranteed when Christ’s soul was supported by the divine nature.²⁴⁵ But how then could Christ feel sympathy with humanity, when He was so different from humanity, when He possessed a divine nature?

The Spirit, Christ’s Redeemer?

The second issue relates to the perfection of the second person of the Trinity. When we think of Christ’s need of the Spirit’s sanctification to transform His human nature, this easily leads to the conclusion that He could not be a true Saviour since, as Irving’s critics claimed, He was a sinner who needed ‘another’ redeemer. This point would have been a fatal weakness in his argument, if Irving had not appropriately responded to it. Before we address this problem, however, it would be beneficial to sketch Irving’s understanding of the dynamic involvement of the Trinity, especially in the earthly ministry of the second person of the Trinity.

The event of the incarnation, according to Irving, was made clearer when it was understood within the context of the Trinity. The eternal Godhead gave Christ human flesh, though the nature of flesh was mortal and corruptible, and at the same time the Godhead

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 69.

²⁴⁵ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 126; *Christ’s Holiness in Flesh*, xiv.

gave Christ immortality and incorruption.²⁴⁶ To understand Irving's view of the incarnation, an introduction of Trinitarian language is necessary: 'He submits Himself unto His Father to be made flesh; His Father sendeth the Holy Spirit to prepare Him a body...and thus, by creative act of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, not by ordinary generation, Christ is constituted a Divine and human nature in one person.'²⁴⁷ The second person of the Trinity, following the purpose of the Father, humbled Himself to take on human nature, in and through which He would fulfil the Godhead's will, having been empowered by the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁸ Irving interpreted Christ's earthly ministry in terms of the power of the Holy Spirit, since the Father was in him by the Holy Spirit. As Irving eloquently expressed the work of the Spirit upon humanity:

the humanity, sustained of the Spirit, as by the Spirit it was formed, was able to receive and unite itself to the Divinity, through all the perilous voyage, from the nativity to the resurrection, or rather to the ascension and installation in glory²⁴⁹

The Holy Spirit's intimate relationship with Christ suggests that the whole Trinity was manifested in and through the event of the Incarnation. The will of Christ's soul was towards the Father by the work of the Holy Spirit; or more fully, it was through the Holy Ghost that 'the will of the Father is communicated to the Son, and the obedience of the Son returned [to the will of the Father]'.²⁵⁰ Since Christ's flesh was liable to all temptations, He mourned, grieved, and prayed to God continually, through union with the Holy Spirit, so that He was prevented from yielding to any of the temptations.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Irving, *Notes on the Standards of the Church of Scotland* in *CW*, I, 604.

²⁴⁷ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 159. Colin Gunton portrayed Irving's Christology as an articulation of the principle *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* (the actions of the Trinity in the world are undivided) in 'Two Dogmas Revisited', 363.

²⁴⁸ Michael Peget noted that in Irving's Christology, 'the person of the Son appears to have faded into the background of the incarnation', which is partly due to Irving's reliance on Coleridge's over-personalisation of the will, in which 'the will is the very seat of the personality'. Michael Peget, 'Christology and Original Sin: Charles Hodge and Edward Irving Compared', *Churchman*, 121 (2007), 243.

²⁴⁹ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 321.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 407.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

Inward Temptation - Any Sin in Mind

The other subject we need to consider is the possibility of Christ's committing sin in his mind through inward temptation, in Irving's context. Having the same humanity, Christ was under the same law as men. Under this law, Christ became 'sinful' and wanted to condemn the unholiness which is in humanity.²⁵² As Irving explained, there was a community in Christ's soul with humanity, and His flesh was united to His mind by the same laws as humanity.²⁵³ Therefore Christ was tempted both inwardly and outwardly.²⁵⁴

But Christ had declared that anyone who hated his brother had already killed him, and that anyone looked at a woman lustfully had already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt 5:28). Considering this biblical context and Irving's claim of Christ's being with sinful flesh, there seems to be no chance of Christ avoiding committing sin inwardly with his sinful flesh. Certainly, according to Irving, there was a will in Christ 'which he contradistinguisheth from the will of the Father', which was the will of the flesh; 'The Person of the Word did take a human will under those very bondages into union with himself'.²⁵⁵ Christ could have committed sin because he had both sinful flesh and the will of the flesh.

But at the same time Irving also said that Christ was holy in both in flesh and soul; 'his life was the Holy-Ghost life, and not the natural life of flesh and blood, from his generation'.²⁵⁶ Even though Christ had a will, which was different from that of the Father, he did not wilfully sin because of 'the constraining and enforcing power of his Person, acting Godhead, by the Holy Ghost'.

The flesh by tyrannical force may be used to tempt the will, through the infliction of suffering; through the presentation of objects which it naturally desireth, as food when it is hungry; but if the will consent not, though the flesh be inclined, there is no sin. Christ's will endured these temptations exactly as mine doth; "he was tempted in all

²⁵² Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 8f.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, ix.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 22, 89.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

points, like as I am;” but he yielded not to the temptations, and was therefore without sin.²⁵⁷

Christ’s prayer at the Mount of Olives, ‘Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done’, was decisive for Irving in his interpretation of the will of Christ. Although Christ was ‘temptable and tempted during the days of his flesh, his thoughts, will, words, and deeds were never in the least influenced by temptation’.²⁵⁸ ‘He was in all things sinless’, Irving maintained, ‘though laden with sinful flesh’; ‘He gave Satan no lodgement or residence; he gave sin no quarters within his being’.²⁵⁹

B.2.b. The Spirit Baptism

In exploring Irving’s idea of the incarnation, and the views of his opponents, we find that the crucial differences between Irving and other contemporary theologians are found mainly in their opinions on the Holy Spirit, especially on its working with and for Christ, and on the question of the sinfulness of Christ’s human nature. Since Irving claimed that the work of the Holy Spirit prohibited any contamination of Christ’s humanity, the role of the Holy Spirit had a vital position in his Christology.

In examining this issue, we find a methodological difference between the disputants. Both Irving and his opponents confirmed the sinlessness of Christ, and both recognised the importance of the Holy Spirit in Christ’s ministry.²⁶⁰ Their points of conflict were firstly, over the existence of any proclivity in Christ to sin, and secondly, over the Holy Spirit’s actions in inhibiting this proclivity. Thus, they agreed on the ultimate sinlessness of Christ, but disagreed over Christ’s ‘way’ of attaining this ‘sinlessness’. A close observation of their

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

²⁵⁸ Irving and Carlyle, *The Doctrine Held by the Church of Scotland Concerning the Human Nature of Our Lord, As Stated in Her Standards*, 38.

²⁵⁹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 25f.

²⁶⁰ Although Irving and his opponents confirmed the sinlessness of Christ, most of Irving’s critics claimed that Irving’s view made Christ a sinful Person.

views on the Holy Spirit in Christ's ministry will provide us with a better understanding of both positions.

What, then, is the difference between Irving and his critics concerning the work of the Holy Spirit? Does it lie only in a different time sequence: while Irving stressed the miraculous cleansing by the Holy Ghost at Christ's baptism, his opponents placed it at the moment of incarnation? In truth, Irving did not view Christ's baptism in the Jordan as the critical point of the miraculous cleansing work of the Holy Ghost; rather, he maintained that the cleansing work continued throughout Christ's whole earthly life. Had he designated Christ's baptism as the starting point of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it would have been fatal to Irving's view, for Christ could have been contaminated through his 'sinful flesh' at some time between the incarnation and his baptism at Jordan.²⁶¹

The Immaculate Conception of Jesus: the Virgin Birth of Jesus²⁶²

Irving recognized the Spirit's role in Christ's conception. Although he did not maintain the 'inherent holiness' of Christ, as his opponents claimed, he did assert Christ's perfect holiness from the very moment of his conception; 'Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin, and from which moment the Holy Ghost abode in Him and sanctified Him; so that He was in very deed a holy thing from the beginning of His creature being'.²⁶³ Irving mostly claimed that the Holy Spirit had been deeply involved in the event of the Incarnation; indeed, 'the Holy Ghost was the author of Christ's bodily life'.²⁶⁴ The Holy Ghost was united to Christ's human soul, in Irving's view, and the incarnate God was the

²⁶¹ In this case (if Christ had a sinful flesh and the Spirit's work started at Christ's baptism at Jordan), as most readers are aware, Christ would have been in a natural situation, under the law, and not protected by the work of Holy Ghost, even though Christ had not been contaminated by original sin at His incarnation. Therefore, owing to His proclivity to sin in His humanity, He would have committed a sin during his private life.

²⁶² Theologically, the Immaculate Conception means that the conception of Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, without any stain of original sin, in her mother's womb. And this was defined as a dogma in Roman Catholic Church by Pope Pius IX in December 1854. But for Irving, 'immaculate conception' meant Christ's conception in Mary by the Holy Spirit. Irving did not ever believe the Immaculate Conception.

²⁶³ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in *CW*, V, 121.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

unification of a threefold spiritual substance: the only begotten Son, the human soul, and the Holy Spirit by his kenosis or self-emptying (Phil. 2).²⁶⁵

The human nature that Christ possessed was, for Irving, a genuine one, so it could receive the Spirit's sanctifying work in a full sense; He recognized the Spirit's sanctifying work in the fallen substance of Mary's flesh that had been taken at the moment of conception, while Christ's flesh still possessed the proclivity to sin. Therefore Irving admitted the spotlessness of Christ from the moment of His incarnation.

Irving's opponents, on the other hand, saw the origins of Christ's holiness in his human nature itself through the 'extraordinary conception' of Jesus.²⁶⁶ Cole claimed that if Christ had been conceived with a sinful flesh this would have implied that the Holy Spirit was 'the worker of a sinful workmanship, the Creator of a sinful creature'.²⁶⁷ In Cole's view, Irving denied the Virgin Birth of Jesus, because an ordinary conception would be enough for Christ's incarnation to impart 'sinful flesh' to Christ.²⁶⁸ John Stevens, who believed that all that Christ took from Mary was a body, claimed Christ's purity by his 'double stressing method'; the pure body of Christ, which was prepared from Mary's substance, was united with His pre-existent holy soul.²⁶⁹ According to Irving's opponents, the immaculate conception provided a purified and uncontaminated body of Christ, while for Irving, it provided the ultimate workplace for the Spirit to preserve the body of Christ pure from any contamination, due to its proclivity to sin.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ While Irving stressed the cleansing work of the Spirit against 'proclivity to sin' in Christ's humanity, his opponents tried to locate Christ's sinlessness in His human nature. The difference between Irving and his opponents lay not in their views of the Virgin Birth of Jesus, but of the nature of Christ's humanity.

²⁶⁷ Cole, *Letter to The Rev. Edward Irving*, 77.

²⁶⁸ In Henry Cole's position, Irving definitely denied the Virgin Birth of Jesus because Irving's Christ still has the possibility of being contaminated. In Irving's stance, however, the fact that Christ's sinful flesh was incarnated without contamination of sin by the work of the Spirit was the immaculate conception of Jesus itself.

²⁶⁹ Stevens, *The Sinlessness of Jesus*, 26f.

Concerning his opponents' efforts to locate Christ's holiness in his human nature itself, not in Christ's human obedience to the Godhead's will and the work of the Spirit, Irving maintained that this destroyed the Holy Ghost's work:

By taking away all need of a Holy Ghost work in him all his life long; they destroy his work in sanctifying himself, they close up the Holy Ghost's work in a secret something done in one instant: they destroy Christ as a head of faith, as a head of regeneration, as a head of sanctification, as a head of redemption, by making him inactive, and the Holy Ghost active without him.²⁷⁰

By incarnation Christ became a unique person, 'not as a human person' and 'not from a generation'.²⁷¹ At the moment of incarnation, when Christ was conceived by the Spirit, He was kept from the contamination of original sin and His humanity was also kept from any contamination of sin. He had the limitations of the human condition, and received the teachings and instructions from the Father through the Holy Ghost as he grew up, and obeyed the Father's mind and will.²⁷²

Christ's Baptism at Jordan

In Irving's theological framework, Spirit Baptism has a significant meaning. At the moment of Christ's baptism in the river Jordan, He received a distinct anointing of the Spirit for His forthcoming public ministry. The Spirit, who had been with Christ to keep Him in purity, now anointed Him to perform the supernatural works; 'Then Christ was baptized with the Holy Ghost; then he received the promise of the Father; and then also he was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power'.²⁷³ For Christ, baptism was the assurance of the Father's will, which was confirmed by the voice from heaven announcing His sonship, and

²⁷⁰ Irving, *The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord's Human Nature, Tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith*, 51f.

²⁷¹ Irving, *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses*, vol. I, 140; E. Irving, *The Day of Pentecost or the Baptism with the Holy Ghost* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1830), 4; Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 29.

²⁷² Irving, *The Temptation* in CW, II, 194; Irving, *The Day of Pentecost*, 4.

²⁷³ Irving, *The Day of Pentecost*, 16.

empowering Him by the overflow of the Holy Ghost.²⁷⁴ Consequently, ‘Christ was under the Spirit, not under the law, in this stage, and fulfilled such a holiness of grace’.²⁷⁵

Dods attacked Irving’s view of Christ’s Spirit Baptism in the river Jordan on the grounds that this made invalid the Spirit’s work in Christ’s conception. Dods claimed that according to Irving’s own arguments, he should have admitted that ‘Jesus lived thirty years before he was Christ at all’.²⁷⁶ For Dods, Irving’s notion that Christ received the Spirit’s gradual anointing at different stages was simply not acceptable.

It is true that Irving classified the life of Jesus in terms of stages of the Spirit’s work. Christ’s life from his incarnation to his baptism was the time of growing ‘in the grace of faculties of His nature like another child into mature manhood, struggling with the temptations, and spoiling the tempers of each stage of life’. Christ in this stage was ‘inferior’ to what He would be after Baptism at Jordan.²⁷⁷ When Christ was baptised, his life experienced a more powerful operation of the Holy Ghost than in his childhood. According to Irving, God had given the world to the devil, and the flesh of Christ was the middle ground between the powers of darkness and the powers of light. Christ’s flesh was linked to all the material things that the devil possessed, while his soul was God-possessed in the person of the Holy Ghost. Because Christ’s flesh and soul were joined and united in Him, His flesh was the field of contention between Satan and God.²⁷⁸ The overcoming of the devil and sin, therefore, had to take place in His flesh.²⁷⁹

The Spirit’s anointing of Christ at the Jordan was, as we have seen, for Irving the starting point of Christ’s earthly ministry, which Irving described this as ‘the divine mission

²⁷⁴ Irving, *The Temptation* in *CW*, II, 191.

²⁷⁵ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord’s Supper* in *CW*, II, 539. Irving often described Christ’s private life as being under the law, stressing that Christ had a true humanity. However, this does not mean that the Holy Ghost was not with him. He always confirmed the continual work of the Spirit in Christ’s life, from the incarnation till his ascension.

²⁷⁶ Marcus Dods, *On the Incarnation of the Eternal Word* (London: R. B. Seeley, 1831), 286.

²⁷⁷ Irving, *The Temptation* in *CW*, II, 194.

²⁷⁸ Irving, *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses in Three Volumes* Vol. I, lxiv; Irving, *Christ’s Holiness in Flesh*, ix.

²⁷⁹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 13.

of redeeming a lost and abject world'.²⁸⁰ After Christ was anointed, He was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted (Mk. 1: 12). This temptation was real because His flesh was sinful and vulnerable; if Christ's body had been invulnerable to any temptations, Satan's attack would have been a form of play-acting. Christ was preserved against the temptations by the work of the Spirit. Christ became the model for all believers, who should also strive to overcome, with the Spirit's aid, the world's temptations.

Christ's Spirit baptism became, for Irving, a precursor of Pentecost. It provided the pattern for believers to have supernatural power in the flesh:

That the baptism of the Holy Ghost doth bring to every believer the presence of the Father and the power of the Holy Ghost, according to that measure, at the least, in which Christ during the days of his flesh possessed the same. My idea, therefore, concerning the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or the promise of the Father, is simply this, that it is superhuman supernatural power, or set of powers, which God did from the beginning purpose to place in man, but which he accomplished not to do until his own Son had become man, and kept man's original trust.²⁸¹

The Meaning of the Death of Christ

The death of Christ was, according to Irving, in the Godhead's will, since He had come in the flesh.²⁸² According to Scripture (Jn. 1:29), He was the sacrificial Lamb destined to death.²⁸³ But if Christ died, did this mean that Christ was a sinner, in the Scriptural sense that 'The wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23)?

Irving's opponents, such as Henry Cole, claimed that if Christ's body were mortal, 'his death would not have been voluntary, but of necessity'. If Irving were right, Cole continued, 'Christ did not die of his own will, but died, because, being a personal sinner'.²⁸⁴ Cole

²⁸⁰ Irving, *The Temptation* in *CW*, II, 192.

²⁸¹ Irving, *The Day of Pentecost*, 39.

²⁸² Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 147.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁸⁴ Cole, *The True Signification*, 11.

concluded that Irving's interpretation made Christ a sinner and that Christ's sacrifice became a mere mortal sacrifice, which was insufficient 'to atone for the sins even of one sinner'.²⁸⁵

To this, Irving responded that since humanity had forfeited its created standing by transgression, it needed 'another footing before God', and this was 'the footing of redemption, resting upon another base than that base originally given to it by God'.²⁸⁶ When Christ took sinful flesh, His first task was to redeem it from the power of sin, and His second task was to be sacrificed in order to satisfy God's justice.²⁸⁷ By his perfect faith and the aid of the Holy Ghost, Christ maintained his sinlessness and offered himself as a spotless sacrifice. Therefore the death of Christ meant, for Irving, not only offering the Lamb of God, but also the cutting off of the old generation who had been contaminated with sin (Rom 4:24, 6:9, 10). With His real human flesh, Christ experienced real suffering, real death, and real resurrection.²⁸⁸

Resurrection / Ascension

Irving maintained that the third manifestation of the Holy Spirit was in Christ's Resurrection and Ascension.²⁸⁹ The Holy Spirit's working in Christ at this stage was 'in raising from the dead, and setting Him in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named both in this world and in that which is to come'.²⁹⁰ While the whole work of Christ, until the resurrection, consisted in His taking mortal life and offering it as a perfect sinless sacrifice on the cross, the work of the Holy Spirit was to manifest 'inexhaustible and glorious eternal life into which Christ entered at the resurrection,

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 13.

²⁸⁶ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 148.

²⁸⁷ Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 120.

²⁸⁸ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, xi.

²⁸⁹ Irving distinguished between the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and the operations of it. In his *Homilies on the Lord's Supper*, Irving illustrated the Holy Spirit's three manifestations in Christ: first in his conception; second in his baptism; and third in his resurrection and ascension. In *The Day of Pentecost*, he described the three kinds of operations of the Holy Spirit; baptism of repentance (by John the Baptist), that in Christ, and Pentecost.

²⁹⁰ Edward Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 539; *The Day of Pentecost*, 3.

of which he communicated the fellowship to the church on the day of Pentecost'.²⁹¹ For this reason, Irving believed, blasphemy against Christ shall be forgiven, but not blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

According to Irving, the simple believer and Christ both shared 'sinful flesh'. As Christ's flesh was transformed from mortal to immortal, so the believer's body also could be transformed into an immortal and incorruptible one by the Spirit; this was the assurance to simple believers of victory over death in the resurrection.²⁹² If Christ's flesh were not truly the sinful flesh of man, 'Christ's life is no prototype of the Holy Ghost's power over sinful flesh, and Christ's resurrection is no assurance of my resurrection'.²⁹³

Therefore Christ's 'sinful flesh' works as a link, in Irving's theological framework, between the believer's union with Christ and the believer's assurance of faith. 'The resurrection life', Irving asserted, 'is life of God within the man; it was first consummated in Christ, and belongs to us in virtue of union with him'.²⁹⁴

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Christ's Incarnate Life

In Christ's incarnate life, the continuous work of the Holy Spirit was necessary for not only keeping him from any contamination of sin but also for Christ's obedience to the Father's will. This aid of the Spirit, along with His perfect faith in the Father, supported Christ throughout His life. In his second sermon on the Incarnation, Irving portrayed the whole life of Christ according to the work of the Holy Ghost:

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, He grew in wisdom by the power of the Holy Ghost, and walked by the same inspiration of the Holy Ghost...He was endowed by the Holy Ghost with baptismal gifts and graces, as He had been endowed before with circumcision gifts and graces; and by the power of the Holy Ghost He went about doing all manner of miracles, and by the mighty working of the Holy

²⁹¹ Irving, *The Day of Pentecost*, 3; Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 120.

²⁹² Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, vii, xi, 66, 88; Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 540.

²⁹³ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 28.

²⁹⁴ Irving, *The Day of Pentecost*, 42.

Ghost was raised from the dead to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high, when, becoming Lord and Christ, He shed down the Holy Ghost upon the Church...²⁹⁵

From Christ's incarnation to exaltation, the Spirit enabled Him to fulfil the will of the Father, acting in every moment of His incarnate life. At the moment of Christ's generation, the Spirit's work of sanctification was complete. But 'as increase of year made new demands and brought new trials, the power of sanctification and unction that was in him developed itself the more'.²⁹⁶ For Christ, a more powerful endowment of the Spirit was needed to perform the tasks of each stage of His life. Because Christ willingly followed the purpose of the Father, He could accomplish the tasks by the assistance of the Spirit. This same Spirit, which was with Christ in the event of incarnation, upheld Him under temptations, and kept Him from sinning, and made Him always subservient to the will of God.²⁹⁷ After accomplishing His final task at the Cross, Christ was resurrected and ascended to sit at the right hand of God by the same Spirit, as was the will of the Godhead.²⁹⁸

B.2.c. The Atonement and Full Humanity

Irving's understanding of the atonement cannot be separated from his idea of Christ's sinful flesh. The atonement meant, for Irving, 'the condition of being *at one* with God'.²⁹⁹ He sought to locate the work of atonement in the God's filial love and the person's acceptance of this love.³⁰⁰

There are three distinct elements in Irving's understanding of the atonement. Firstly, for Irving, God's great love for humanity was vital in any understanding of God's atoning work; it was in the starting point and basis of the act of the atonement. The atonement was,

²⁹⁵ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* in CW, V, 88.

²⁹⁶ Irving, *The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord's Human Nature, Tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith*, 44f.

²⁹⁷ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 1.

²⁹⁸ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in CW, II, 539.

²⁹⁹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 88.

³⁰⁰ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in CW, V, 218.

for Irving, ‘the expression of a disposition in the mind of a Person towards other persons’.³⁰¹ Since God so loved this world that he sent his begotten Son (John 3:16) in full humanity, this ensured that the Cross represented real suffering. This encounter with God through Christ’s sinful flesh reflected Irving’s Romantic emphases on sentiment, an elevated view of human capacity, and the striving to transcend human limits.³⁰² God’s abundant love ‘proved how far down the grace of God can go’, so that ‘there is not an abject, miserable wretch whose condition it will not reach down unto’.³⁰³ The atonement was viewed as a natural continuation of the incarnation. God ensured that Christ would possess the same nature that was common to all human beings, and this made the atoning work universal. As we have seen in Irving’s idea of universal atonement, his conception of Christ’s ‘taking humanity, fallen, sinful, and under the sentence of death’ provided the basis for individual faith in Christ as the Redeemer of all.³⁰⁴

Secondly, even though Christ’s salvific mission for all humanity was made perfectly once and for all in His sinful flesh (Heb. x.), His atoning work had not been completely accomplished. Rather, it was, for Irving, an on-going process in each individual. Because of the vulnerability of Christ’s natural body – and of His human will as well – He experienced the real threat of temptation throughout His earthly life. Irving portrayed the continual salvific work of Christ with sinful flesh through His body, which was the Church: ‘How closely love and sorrow are linked together in this the estate of the Church in flesh, is by nothing so apparent as by the life of the Son of God, who embodied the fullness of the Father’s love’.³⁰⁵ For Irving, then, both Christ’s life and the life of the Church were a continual atoning work³⁰⁶, and ‘the death of Christ ... is the consummation of the living sacrifice which He offered all His life long by presenting the members of His flesh as

³⁰¹ Irving, *The Confession of Faith*, xc.

³⁰² Elliot, ‘Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis’, 276.

³⁰³ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 97.

³⁰⁴ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 91.

³⁰⁵ E. Irving, *Jesus Our Example* in *CW*, IV, 548.

³⁰⁶ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 63.

instruments of holiness unto righteousness'.³⁰⁷ 'The gradual progressive revelation of the humanity of Christ with all its limitation and obedience becomes a paradigm for Christian living with its emphasis on a continual faith in God the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit'.³⁰⁸ Hence, the triumph of Christ against all the evils in this world was the foundation, and also the process, of His salvific mission. The power of the God's love, expressed through the humanity of Christ, opened the way for all human beings to be saved. Christ's triumph on the Cross was the confirmation of the salvific mission of his earthly life. Therefore the *Christus Victor* could, for Irving, be applied to the whole of Christ's earthly ministry as well as to the ongoing work of the Church: Christ, as our High Priest, is 'still making atonement for the sins of the nation ... whose number is not yet completed', and the work of redemption would be finished in His return.³⁰⁹

Thirdly, Irving explained the atoning work in Trinitarian language. God the Father's love was its starting point. 'Christ's gracious gift of atonement for all men was the perfect expression of the Father's grace'.³¹⁰ God's love, as well as His hatred for sin, made His Son manifest in fully human form: 'The Son is the full expression of the Father's will'.³¹¹ Irving understood the atoning work of Christ as a foundational act predating the creation: Christ, he insisted was 'the creator-redeemer before the foundation of the world'.³¹² As Christ was kept sinless by the power of the Holy Spirit, so the individual believer also depended on the Holy Spirit for the faith that would bring a personal relationship with God.³¹³

³⁰⁷ *PW*, II, 162f.

³⁰⁸ Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 54.

³⁰⁹ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 137; *PW*, I, 67.

³¹⁰ Dorries, 'Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy', 333.

³¹¹ Irving, *God our Father*, in *CW*, IV, 256.

³¹² Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 79.

³¹³ *PW*, I, 188f.

C. Irving's Friends

Irving's friends in Scotland gradually accepted this teaching on Christ's sinful flesh. The Church of Scotland, meanwhile, concerned over this growing questioning of its Westminster standards, began looking closely at Irving and his associates.

Thomas Erskine

Concerning the influences on Erskine's Christology, two names can be mentioned: William Law (1686-1761) and Edward Irving. From early 1827 Erskine read the writings of both Law and Irving.³¹⁴ Don Horrocks has described Law as the prime source of Erskine's Christology, while Nicholas Needham has argued that Erskine adopted Irving's view.³¹⁵ While the direct evidence is scanty, it would be fair to say that both Law and Irving contributed to Erskine's understanding on Christ's genuine humanity.³¹⁶ Erskine certainly had contact with Irving's Christological works, such as *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened* (1828), an article of 'On the True Humanity of Christ' in the prophetic quarterly magazine, *The Morning Watch*, Vol.II, (March 1829), and *Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature* (1830).

The first references to Irving's concept of 'Christ's sinful flesh' in Erskine's writings appeared between the summer of 1829 and January 1830. In a letter to his cousin Rachel,

³¹⁴ T. Erskine, *Letters*, I, 109-112, 114, 123f.

³¹⁵ Don Horrocks, *Laws of the Spiritual Order: Innovation and Reconstruction in the Soteriology of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004); Nicholas R. Needham, *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen: His Life and Theology 1788-1837* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990).

³¹⁶ While to explore the source of Erskine's view of Christ's humanity is not one of the main subjects of this thesis, it may be worth mentioning it briefly in the context of Irving's influence on the theological dissidents in Scotland. Needham claims that Erskine adopted Irving's Christology because he thought Erskine's letter (to Rachel Erskine, July 1829, in *Letters*, I, 156) contained the language of Irving's Christology 'unmistakably'. Although Erskine's letter had a similar tone to Irving's, it is not certain that came only from Irving. Needham's conviction lacks sufficient proof in this sense. Neither does Horrocks provide good support on Erskine's credit from Law. In *Laws of the Spiritual Order*, Horrocks maintains that Erskine's primary Christological dependence was on Law rather than Irving. But Erskine said he preferred Law because he was more impressed with Law's *Spirit of Prayer* and *Spirit of Love* than with Irving's prophetic *Discourses*, rather than that he preferred Law over Irving on the Incarnation.

Erskine first conveyed his idea of the fallen or tainted human nature of Christ, an idea that was later developed in *The Brazen Serpent* of February 1831.

Within John's gospel, Erskine discerned the doctrine of God's unlimited love in the passage 'Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more'. Christ declared that He would not condemn the sinner, and proclaimed that 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life' (John 8: 11-12). Since 'the light consists in the forgiving holy love', for Erskine, Christ's refusal to condemn the sinner was natural. As 'the New Head of the human nature', Erskine claimed, 'Christ had suffered death as a partaker of that tainted life which was under the curse ... In the death of Christ the old life was exhausted, and in the resurrection the new life was infused'.³¹⁷

The influence of Irving can be found in another letter dated 15 January 1830. Here Erskine wrote that since 'the virtue of Christ's sacrifice is intimately connected with His being the root of the humanity, he did not take hold of a branch, He took the very root'. For Erskine, the meaning of God becoming incarnate and coming into this world was that 'He came into the place which Adam had occupied and the sap of the tree was as in its fountain'.

He was in our fallen nature. He took part of the same flesh and blood of which the children partook, but He sinned not ... It was He who entered into the root of the fallen tree of human nature, poured out His life an offering for sin, even the life and heart-blood of the human nature. He Himself as an individual also had fulfilled all righteousness; not being subject to the penalty, but being the Head of the fallen family, He freely subjected Himself to the penalty, and thus acknowledged the justice of the sentence of the family.³¹⁸

The idea of Christ's fallen nature was present in Erskine's doctrine of the headship of Christ. He regarded the fallen humanity of Christ as the great truth, and acknowledged two aspects of Christ; 'On the one side he was one with the Godhead, on the other side he was one with the fallen manhood'.³¹⁹ Christ's being of one flesh with humanity was prerequisite to humanity's becoming one spirit with Christ. The death of Christ, who had 'one flesh and

³¹⁷ 'T. Erskine to his cousin Miss Rachel Erskine, July 1829', in *Letters*, I, 156f.

³¹⁸ T. Erskine, 'Extract from a Letter, Jan. 15, 1830', in *Letters*, I, 287.

³¹⁹ T. Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 65.

blood', ultimately provided, for Erskine, the clue to every individual's achievement of a holy life. Erskine explained the limitations of Christ's body, which had been tainted by sharing 'one flesh and blood', and it was through God's righteousness that the incarnate God lay under the punishment of sin.

Having become partaker of that *one blood* which had sinned against God, he became in consequence excluded as a man from the presence of his Father's glory, and subject to death. The tainted life which was in that blood was not permitted to appear in the presence of the holy God; and thus he was shut out from his presence, until that tainted life was poured out in death; and he accepted the punishment, the exclusion, and the death, saying, "Thou art righteous, O God, that judgest thus." He had always access to his Father in the Spirit, that is, in the eternal life, because that life was not under the condemnation; but whilst he bore about with him the natural life, the man Christ Jesus could not appear in the holy of holies. In all this the holiness of God was unspeakably declared and glorified. The Holy One of God become flesh could not stand in the pure presence of God, because the flesh was tainted. And that Holy One, by accepting this punishment of sin, testified to the righteousness of the punisher. And he knew what he testified, for he was God, and he was man.³²⁰

The oneness of an individual's flesh with that of Christ was fundamental to Erskine's Christology; '*It was our flesh that crucified Jesus, as it was our flesh that was crucified in Jesus*'.³²¹ In order to become humankind's true Redeemer, Christ took on 'a *fallen nature*'; a nature which had fallen by sin, and which, in consequence of this, lay under condemnation. He came into it as a new head, that he might take it out of the fall, and redeem it from sin, and lift it up to God'.³²²

'Erskine's full-blooded adherence'³²³ to Irving's doctrine produced Erskine's incarnationally oriented soteriology. To gain salvation through Christ's self-sacrifice, Erskine believed, a sort of *homoousian* relationship between the Saviour and the believers should be established. For this, the flesh on the Cross should be that of Erskine himself; otherwise, there is no means of connection with God's redemptive work. If Christ had no common point in His fallen nature, 'he could not have tasted death for every man, and his

³²⁰ Ibid., 72.

³²¹ Ibid., 77.

³²² Ibid., 37f.

³²³ Needham, *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, 126, 474.

resurrection could not necessarily have involved that of every other man'.³²⁴ These thoughts clearly reflected the influence of Irving. Since it was a *fallen nature* that was fallen in sin, the suffering of our nature was necessary in the person of Christ Jesus.³²⁵ Had the blood on the Cross been that of bulls or goats, it could have not taken away sin; it would have been worthless as a substitute since it would not have been the blood of the offender.³²⁶ Therefore the eternal Son, for Erskine, took upon himself fallen human nature, thereby establishing a bond of brotherhood with all humanity, for claiming all individuals in Christ.

The doctrine of the human nature of Jesus Christ is not merely that he is of the same nature, of the same flesh and blood with every man; but that he has part of that one nature, that one flesh and blood, of which, as a great whole, all are partakers.³²⁷

The work of divine nature in Christ combined with Christ's headship of the new humanity, in Erskine's thinking, to provide us with the prototype of Christian life. Since Jehovah the word became flesh, which was our flesh, 'we have a standard by which we may at all times measure the mind of God towards ourselves and every individual of the nature'.³²⁸

For Erskine, atonement was not merely a believer's shift from death to life, but also the actual reconciliation of human existence with God. As did Irving, Erskine held that the believer found assurance of salvation through Christ because they shared the same flesh: 'Jesus has taken our flesh, and become one flesh with us, in order that we might be one spirit with him.'³²⁹ There are two kinds of bond between Christ and believers, according to Erskine; the first bond was by the flesh, which was a product of Christ's love for human beings, and the other was by the Spirit, which ultimately led them to the righteous life.³³⁰

³²⁴ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 44

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43. This contradicted the claims of Henry Cole, Irving's opponent. See, Henry Cole *The true signification*, 13.

³²⁷ Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 43.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

The death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, for Erskine, replaced the old order of the ‘flesh’ by the new order in which people would live according to the Spirit.³³¹ Christ’s one ‘flesh with us’, in Erskine’s idea, pointed to ‘the personal glorious advent and reign of Jesus Christ upon this world’.

This is the gospel – this is that great truth of the fallen humanity of Jesus, the truth that he who was Jehovah should have consented to be made of that one blood of which God had made all nations on the face of the earth, in order that he might shed that one blood, and thus make atonement for the sins of every man, - the truth that he should have become one flesh with us, that we might become one spirit with him – this is that gospel, the belief of which must fill with joyful and glorious hope, in the prospect of the coming kingdom, of him who hath thus loved us and given himself for us.³³²

This is similar to Irving’s apocalyptic theology, which we will explore soon. Erskine also used Irving-like phrases in other writings, as, for example, when he penned words of sympathy to his sister on the death of her husband.

He has bid an eternal adieu to sin and sinful flesh, and he is waiting, in joyful hope, the day when the kingdom of Christ shall be manifested in glory on this earth. Although we remain on earth, we are called to the same high calling, to rejoice in God and to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, who saves us from the wrath to come.³³³

John McLeod Campbell

As we have seen, Erskine and McLeod Campbell seemed to have come to similar theological views quite independently.³³⁴ After Irving became acquainted with them, they communicated and shared their ideas. Concerning the doctrine of universal atonement, as we have seen in chapter one, Irving accepted it after he had met McLeod Campbell in May

³³¹ This is similar to Irving’s claim in *Orthodox and Catholic*, 148.

³³² Ibid., 149f (129f). Erskine provides Biblical text for ‘atonement for the sins of every man’ in Acts 17:26, Heb. 2:14, and 1 John 2:2.

³³³ T. Erskine, ‘Letter to his sister Mrs. Stirling, 21st March, 1830’, in *Letters I*, 172.

³³⁴ See, chapter I, B.1. There are many claims concerning the two theologians’ mutual theological indebtedness. See Don Horrocks, *Laws of the Spiritual Order: Innovation and Reconstruction in the Soteriology of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), 13f, and P. Stevenson, *God in Our Nature: the Incarnational Theology of John McLeod Campbell* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 111-13.

1828, by which time there had been theological consensus among McLeod Campbell, Erskine, and A. J. Scott.

McLeod Campbell's Christological views developed after he had met Irving in Edinburgh and were influenced by Irving's view that Christ's humanity was not inherently holy. When Irving first met McLeod Campbell in the summer of 1828, McLeod Campbell found that Irving's 'peculiar views were new' to him, and 'too important to be suddenly taken up'.³³⁵ Irving's view of the person of Christ certainly had a profound impact on McLeod Campbell's theological thinking.

According to Peter Stevenson, McLeod Campbell had a coherent Christology from the earliest stages of his ministry, and his expressions about the humanity of Christ are 'woven into sermons on a variety of topics'.³³⁶ From 1830, we can find McLeod Campbell's stress on the true humanity of Christ in his sermons and tracts. For example, in his preface to *Two Sermons*, McLeod Campbell clarified the nature of the body of Christ as ours, saying 'the second person of the Deity took into personal substance with himself, the very flesh of the Virgin Mary; and not a better flesh, an immortal flesh, an incorruptible flesh'.³³⁷ By this union of the creature with the Creator, Campbell asserted, the foundation of redemption was established. In his sermon based on Psalm 26, preached at Row on 10 April 1831, McLeod Campbell affirmed Christ's human nature as 'fallen' or 'sinful':

That being God he became man – that being the second person in the Godhead he took the sinful nature of man, and was found in form and fashion as a man – that he became a man, being still God, though he now had taken unto himself the nature of man – that as a man he did continually choose the good and reject the evil, and fulfilled all righteousness – and that that perfect holiness, which he had before he became man, was continued in his becoming man, and was never sullied through his becoming man: but that he was mighty to bring glory continually to the Father, and that he always presented himself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, so that having been

³³⁵ John McLeod Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections, Referring to His Early Ministry in the Parish of Row, 1825-31* (London: Macmillan, 1873), 28.

³³⁶ P. Stevenson, *God in Our Nature*, 152.

³³⁷ McLeod Campbell, *Two Sermons* (London: John Hatchard & Son, 1830), vi.

without sin, when he came he continued without sin when he took our nature – he was without sin and did fulfil the righteous law of his Father.³³⁸

The sermon has such a remarkable resemblance to Irving's ideas that it is difficult to distinguish it from an Irving sermon. McLeod Campbell thought that the flesh that Christ took at the incarnation was the same flesh of McLeod Campbell himself: 'The flesh of Christ differed not in one particle from mine; but Christ did present his flesh, which was even my flesh, without spot to God through the eternal Spirit'.³³⁹ The flesh of Christ was open to all the kinds of temptations that affect human beings. Sin brought both humankind and Christ under the curse: 'He took our nature and it was under the curse because of sin, and he came under the curse for us'.³⁴⁰ If Christ's flesh had been different from that of humanity, 'the death of Christ would have proved him to be mistaken'.³⁴¹ In such expressions we can discern clear similarities with Irving's view.

Along with Irving, McLeod Campbell maintained that it was the Holy Spirit that prevented Christ from committing sin: 'Jesus, through the Spirit, presented himself without spot to God'.³⁴² At the same time he also extended the Spirit's work to enable common believers to have the obedient mind of Christ: 'through the work of God in Christ, through our being included under Christ as our head, we are now in the condition that God is not imputing sin to any one of us'.³⁴³ McLeod Campbell's Christology implied that Christ's work of redemption was not confined to the event of the crucifixion; rather, it was accomplished throughout His incarnate life. In similar manner to that of Irving, McLeod Campbell claimed that Christ was engaged in a battle with the flesh throughout his earthly life but remained in perfect obedience to God.³⁴⁴ Hence he portrayed the moment of Christ's

³³⁸ McLeod Campbell, *Notes of Sermons by the Rev. J. M. Campbell* (Paisley: J. Valance, Printed only for the Subscribers, 1831-1832), 2.21.11.

³³⁹ J. McLeod Campbell, *Sermons, Taken in Short Hand* (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1831-2), 2.23.109.

³⁴⁰ McLeod Campbell, *Notes of Sermons*, 1.8.4.

³⁴¹ McLeod Campbell, *Sermons, Taken in Short Hand*, 2.23.105.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.23.102.

³⁴³ McLeod Campbell, *Notes of Sermons*, 2.21.12f.

³⁴⁴ McLeod Campbell, *Notes of Sermons*, 1.8.4.; *Sermons, Taken in Short Hand*, 2.23.95.

crucifying His flesh as recurring throughout His life, and this was made possible by the Holy Spirit: 'it was accounted of by him as a dead thing, because of sin; and he ever presented himself, through the eternal Spirit, without spot to God'.³⁴⁵

For McLeod Campbell, Christ, who had the same flesh as human beings, served as an example to individual believers; they too should submit their flesh in obedience to God and crucify it in faith. Christ was vulnerable to temptations, but He resisted them and kept His perfect holiness by being wholly dependent on the work of the Spirit. McLeod Campbell thought that as Christ died and was resurrected by the Spirit, ordinary believers were intended to live a new life through the same Spirit. The Christology of McLeod Campbell, as well as of Irving, emphasised the believer's moral obedience. Their thought focussed not only on the assurance of salvation through God's love, but also on the believer's sanctified life.

By the will of the Father, Christ humbled himself, 'recognizing that his flesh was evil' and 'continually receiving the Spirit from the Father'.³⁴⁶ As Christ 'trod a path of holiness', McLeod Campbell argued, 'we should tread in his footsteps'.³⁴⁷ The 'Fatherhood' of God was revealed concretely in the Son, in McLeod Campbell's thinking, and Christ, 'our perfect elder brother', enabled us to have the life of 'sonship'. Through spiritual union with Christ, common believers could participate in the character of the God who revealed himself in their humanity through Christ.

Once McLeod Campbell accepted Irving's Christology, he developed it in his own theological understanding. While Irving used somewhat naive expressions in describing his view of Christ's genuine humanity, Campbell used more precise theological language. In his later writings, McLeod Campbell encouraged readers to understand that 'there is even more

³⁴⁵ McLeod Campbell, *Sermons, Taken in Short Hand*, 2.23.95.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.14.346.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.14.348.

glory to God in bringing holiness out of sin, than in bringing holiness out of nothing'.³⁴⁸

Campbell stressed the true love of Christ who was in true humanity. Through taking on human nature, Campbell asserted, Christ became 'the brother of those whose sin He confesses before the Father'.³⁴⁹ Because He took human nature, 'He might quicken and raise our nature' and by doing so, 'He should be the first-born among many brethren ... in which the Father takes pleasure'.³⁵⁰ Because Christ was 'at once the true and full revelation of God' and 'the manifestation of man as God intends man to be', He could be our Mediator.³⁵¹ McLeod Campbell portrayed Christ's two-fold acts as *God toward man* and *man toward God*. Among these, he was particularly attracted to Christ's work on behalf of humanity through the atonement, saying 'it is in the dealing of the Son with the Father on our behalf ... that the full light of the atonement shines to us'.³⁵² Christ, as the brother and representative man, confessed His brothers' sin because they joined with Him in faith and true humanity. Therefore, 'our faith is, in truth, the Amen of our individual spirits to that deep, multiform, all-embracing harmonious Amen of humanity, in the person of the Son of God, to the mind and heart of the Father in relation to man'.³⁵³ 'We draw near to God', McLeod Campbell affirmed, 'when we come to Him in the mind of Christ, because it is God's own mind in humanity'.³⁵⁴

Alexander J. Scott

In August 1828, Alexander J. Scott joined Irving's National Scotch Church as a missionary and assistant minister.³⁵⁵ Irving described him as 'a most precious youth – the finest and strongest faculty for theology I ever met with', and Scott devoted himself in 'teaching and

³⁴⁸ McLeod Campbell, *Responsibility for the Gift of Eternal Life* (London: Macmillan, 1873), 9.

³⁴⁹ J. McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of Atonement and its Relation to Remission of Sins and Eternal Life*, Fourth ed. (London: J. Clarke, 1959), 146.

³⁵⁰ J. McLeod Campbell, *Fragments of Truth: Being the Exposition of Several Passages of Scripture*, Third edn. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1861), 99.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁵² McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of Atonement*, 176.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 225.

³⁵⁴ McLeod Campbell, *Fragments of Truth*, 104.

³⁵⁵ John Hair, *Regent Square, Eighty Years of a London Congregation* (London: J. Nisbet, 1898), 86.

preaching among the spiritually destitute population of Westminster, which had excited his sympathies'.³⁵⁶ Irving wrote to Scott's father soon after the start of his labours in London, that 'Your son has taken up the cross, and I think he will not lay it down till he receives the crown. He is a very stay to me; he comforts me greatly'.³⁵⁷

McLeod Campbell noticed Sandy Scott's distinctive Christology as early as 1827, when Scott described Christ in a sermon as 'the one perfect witness' to God – the author and finisher of faith, based on the words 'I have given him a witness to the people', which was in contradiction of 'all men's distrust and suspicions and hard thoughts of God'.³⁵⁸ His views on the humanity of Christ 'stood in sharp contrast to the penal substitutionary doctrine of atonement then prevalent in Scotland'.³⁵⁹ When he was working as Irving's assistant, Scott took up the doctrine of Christ's sinful human nature.³⁶⁰ The church minutes reveal that Scott shared Irving's notion of the humanity of Christ.

Concerning the humanity of Christ, Scott thought that it 'translates the ineffable language of the Most High into man's native language'.³⁶¹ The human emotions attributed to God, including love and anger, were 'a mere confusion of spiritual principles'.³⁶² Through Christ, Scott believed, the light of God is reflected. According to Scott, the prominent distinction of Christ's character was a moral one which was 'love to God with all his heart, and to his neighbour as himself, with no peculiar selection'.³⁶³ God's unlimited love as reflected in Christ prohibited the doctrine of election for Scott; 'A study of God's predeterminate purpose may be far from a study of God as the east is from the west'.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 87. Receiving Irving's invitation to be his assistant, Scott was said to have replied: "I cannot accept it; I have told you all my unbelief". "Never mind, never mind", exclaimed Irving with all the generous fervour of his noble nature. "Come along with me, you shall be free as air". (John Hunter, 'Alexander Scott', *The Expositor* (8th series) vol 21. London: Hodder& Stoughton, 1921), 394f.

³⁵⁷ J. Thompson, *The Owens College* (Manchester: J. E. Cornish, 1886), 171.

³⁵⁸ Donald Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1877), II, 125.

³⁵⁹ Newell, 'A. J. Scott and His Circle', 37.

³⁶⁰ W. Jones, *Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Edward Irving, A.M.* (London: John Bennett, 1835), 260.

³⁶¹ A. J. Scott, *On the Divine Will* (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1830), 16.

³⁶² Ibid., 17.

³⁶³ Ibid., 16.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 7.

D. Conclusion

The development of Irving's idea of Christ's sinful flesh cannot be easily defined as occurring within a certain period or as being influenced from a particular source. As his lifelong friend, Thomas Carlyle, observed, Irving's 'ready to learn' mind could absorb all sorts of knowledge: 'whatever he acquired from others came out in a new and original form, after having passed through the alembic of his own mind'.³⁶⁵ From the time of his arrival in London, he had invested a large portion of his daily routine to study. In his associations with leading scholars, he exchanged ideas and knowledge. And it would be fair to say that he was on the listening side in most cases.

If pressed to define the origin of Irving's Christology, we would say that it was the synthesis of his experience and study, and it can be traced back to his Scots identity. His long boyhood walks to hear the 'Ecclefechan gospel' preached at the Secession church had been a formative influence on his mind, as had his youthful visits to the graves of Covenanters in the district. His favouring of the Scots Confession of 1560 was an expression of his strong Scottish Presbyterian identity. Irving believed that the Scots Confession supported his view of the person of Christ. We can notice that there were differing valid interpretations of the Scots Confession, as was evident in the heresy cases that came before the General Assembly in the early 1830s. However, it is not clear to what extent his views on Christology were influenced by the Scots Confession; rather, he clearly justified his view with it in controversy.

His time with Thomas Chalmers at St John's in Glasgow was also important to his theological development. The desperate situation of the working classes in this industrialising city infused Irving with concern for suffering humanity. Even though Irving

³⁶⁵ T. Carlyle, 'Death of the Rev. Edward Irving,' *Fraser's Magazine* (January, 1835), 100.

had not fully agreed with Chalmers' larger social reform commitments – the construction of the godly commonwealth through improvements in pastoral care and poor-relief – he was deeply committed to his pastoral ministry among Glasgow's poor, believing that social infirmity could be cured by the Lord's supply of spiritual care as well.

Irving's 'emotional preaching' made a great impact on London society in the late 1820s and early 1830s.³⁶⁶ As soon as Irving settled in London, he became critical of what he viewed as metropolitan 'worldly religion'; it fell short of his standard of social justice and faith. As a 'great orator', he reproached the infidelity of the City and called people to repent. As John the Baptist had cried for repentance in the wilderness, Irving called in the crowded city for people to recognise the love of God, which had been manifested in His sinful flesh. As Christ had become perfect through shared suffering with humanity, Irving hoped that this suffering world would be restored by a Divine love that sympathized with all people.³⁶⁷

The expression, Christ's 'sinful flesh', emerged through his homilies on the Trinity and the sacraments. This idea had not appeared suddenly but was the fruit of his journeys in his earlier life. Since his first mention of 'Christ's sinful flesh' appeared in his series of discourses on the Life of John the Baptist which Irving delivered in 1823, we can fairly say that this doctrine probably commenced at this point. This inference is supported by Irving's own testimony: in his account of Mary Campbell, he stated that his teaching of Christ's genuine humanity began in 1823 or 1824.³⁶⁸ But Irving's developed account of his doctrine of Incarnation was not published until 1828, after he had invested more reading and reflection in the subject. As he had experienced considerable suffering and disappointment during the 1820s, so Irving's emerging Christology was infused with passionate feeling.

³⁶⁶ Elisabeth Jay, *The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 60.

³⁶⁷ Irving, *John the Baptist* in *CW*, II, 98.

³⁶⁸ E. Irving, 'Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts', *Fraser's Magazine* (January 1832), 757. In 'Facts Connected', Irving said that Mary Campbell knew what Irving had been preaching for six or seven years; that is, from 1823 or 1824. Irving's lectures in 1823 on the Gospel of St Luke, which were published later under the title of *The Temptation* in *CW*, clearly express his idea of Christ's genuine humanity.

Samuel T. Coleridge and Hatley Frere were major influences on Irving's theology, but his 'venerable companion', the sixteenth-century theologian, Richard Hooker, made a fundamental contribution to Irving's ideas of the person of Christ. Irving's exploration of the divine mystery was welcomed by his congregation, but attracted wide public criticism.

In Irving's Christology, 'sinful, mortal flesh' provided the fundamental basis of a simple believer's final victory. The claim that the same flesh was shared by Christ and the simple believer formed the cornerstone of Irving's Christology: 'The consubstantiality of flesh with us is as much an article of the right faith concerning Christ, as is the article of his being altogether without sin'.³⁶⁹ This flesh, with its proclivity to sin, became for Irving the ground for the Spirit's continuing work. Christ was supported by the Spirit from the moment of His conception to His exaltation. Simple believers could also achieve exaltation by following the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

For simple believers, Irving's Christology provided assurance for their faith, not simply in the sense that the Spirit worked in their lives and led them to their final hope, but also in the sense that by sharing the same true humanity they could perform what their Redeemer did with the powerful continual support of the Spirit. Irving showed that Christ was the model for faith by His perfect moral obedience; Christ, as a Person who shared the same humanity with His brothers and sisters, ensured that human faith was not void, but it was real, as He was real.

Christ was also the model of believers' resurrection and of their participation in His kingdom; in real flesh – it was sinful flesh – Christ overcame all temptations and was resurrected and glorified to sit on the throne; in the same manner, all believers were expected to experience the same 'change' with Christ in order to participate in the coming Kingdom. For Irving, the Lord's coming was like 'a morning shining with splendour'. This meant not

³⁶⁹ Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh, The Form, Fountain Head, and Assurance to us of Holiness in Flesh. In Three Parts*, 1.

only that the whole earth would be filled with his glory, but also that common believers 'shall be for ever with the Lord, partakers of his throne, partakers of his crown, and partakers of his government'.³⁷⁰ Irving's eloquent description of Christ's genuine humanity as 'sinful flesh', however, proved fatal to his ministry in the Church of Scotland because most of his contemporaries could not understand what Irving really meant by the phrase.

³⁷⁰ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 60.

Chapter IV. The Endowment of the Spiritual Gifts in Irving's Circle

Introduction

The phenomenon of spiritual gifts is often neglected by theologians. Many cases of extraordinary spiritual manifestations have been described within the Christian tradition, but few have attempted to produce a theological explanation. While some have recognised the gifts of tongues and spiritual healing as miraculous interventions of the Godhead, the theological implications have been neglected. Edward Irving, however, did seek to place the spiritual gifts within his essentially Christocentric theological framework. Irving's idea of Christ's sinful flesh contributed to the formulation of his views of the Spirit's manifestation in both Christ and humanity.

In the previous chapter, we found that Irving's idea of the Incarnation had been shaped partly through his reflections on the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and that the whole earthly life of the Son of Man could be explained in terms of His Spirit Baptism. What united Christ and believers was for Irving their sharing the 'sinful flesh', and this led Irving to believe in the eventual restoration of Apostolic spiritual gifts.

The Pentecostal manifestation has appeared in the later history of the Church in a variety of forms—among them prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues. Upon being given to the followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), many believe that these manifestations as the gifts of the Holy Spirit have continued in isolated instances over the centuries. Because of this not-continual nature, the charismatic gifts have been seen as incompatible with the regular liturgical order of the church. Irving, however, sought to incorporate manifestations of the supernatural gifts in regular church services. This in turn brought the trustees of the Regent Square church to bring a case against him in the Presbytery of London, which led to Irving's eviction from his church.

In this chapter I will consider the connections between Irving's doctrine of the person of Christ and his idea of the Holy Spirit's manifestation in believers. I will also provide a brief sketch of those spiritual phenomena that are relevant to Irving's thought and career.

A. Anthropological View

A.1. Irving's Concept of 'Man'

For Irving, man was created in the image of God, after His own likeness.¹ As man was God's final creature, he expressed the Creator's perfect beauty and knowledge, 'as the image of God, and after the likeness in which God should appear'.² The likeness of humans to God, in Irving's thought, enabled persons to 'act the divine part among earthly scenes'.³

The Incarnation of Christ was, for Irving, the completion of the great work of creation.⁴ The incarnation of Christ itself was 'no less than a manifestation of His own glory, and the eternal blessedness of all His obedient and dutiful creatures'.⁵ While Christ's incarnation was the accomplishment of the end of creation, the creation of man was a preparative work for the incarnation. Irving regarded the creation of both pure spirits in heaven and earthly creatures with a body and soul as preparation for the Godhead's manifestation in human form. Since man has 'the functions of spirit' which is visible through 'tabernacles of clay', human beings were 'the type of that Divine form of being which Christ was to be'.⁶ For Irving, 'Man is made on very purpose to bring the invisible mind of God to light, to be his image and his likeness, through which he may be seen and

¹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, ix.

² Irving, *The Parable of the Sower* in *CW*, I, 74.

³ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 80.

⁴ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in *CW*, V, 59, 94.

⁵ *Ibid*, 60.

⁶ *Ibid*, 93

known in his working over the creation'.⁷ Although the creation of man was 'more glorious than the creation of all the inferior animals', 'Adam was not the perfect work' since there had to be a Christ, the Second Adam.⁸

If the creation had been perfect and sufficient while yet the Christ was unconstituted, then why should there be a Christ at all? There cannot be two perfections, there cannot be two unchangeables, otherwise there were two gods.⁹

Irving's distinction between Adam and Christ relied on the latter's redemptive role for the former. If Adam had been created as a 'perfect work', according to Irving, the redemptive work for human beings should have been accomplished through him, without necessitating the later incarnation of Christ. For Irving, when the fullness of time was come, the Second Adam, or Christ, came into this world; God the Creator prepared his body from a woman's substance and gave Him a reasonable soul. The eternal Word joined Himself in consubstantial union, becoming both the Son of man and the Son of God. This manifestation of God as a human person was, for Irving, the end of creation.¹⁰ Irving's word of 'incompleteness' applied to his view of Adam as an 'imperfect work', which was completed by the incarnation of Christ.

For Irving, sin was not by God's decree, but served as a 'necessary evil' to provoke Christ's coming. Sin was the distinctive characteristic of human beings; 'sin is not a thing created of God, but it is a condition of the creatures, demonstrative of their inferiority to the Creator, and their inability to subsist without Him'.¹¹ Irving noted that the fall of man was not accidental but had been permitted by God, and this became the formal cause of the incarnation.¹² Hence Irving's concept of man, in his Christocentric mindset, was strongly related to the event of the Incarnation. Seeing the Fall as a consequence of humanity, Irving

⁷ Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 14.

⁸ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in *CW*, V, 91-3

⁹ *Ibid*, 98.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 94; *PW*, I, 152.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 99.

¹² *Ibid*, 10.

held that humanity was not only ‘the type of that Divine form of being which Christ was to be’, but also provided the essential and formal cause of His coming.¹³ ‘If man had not fallen, there would never have been upon this earth any such event as the incarnation, whereof the first fruit is to recover that which Adam lost, and, at the least, to reinstate mankind and their habitation in that condition wherein they were created’.¹⁴

As the *Imago Dei* has a significant meaning in that humankind was ‘the type of that Divine form of being which Christ was to be’, the fall of Adam was also a preparatory stage for the arrival of Christ into this world. The fall of humankind had been permitted and foreseen by God. Therefore, for Irving, ‘the mystery of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world’ was understandable in terms of the *Imago Dei* and the Fall.¹⁵ The second person of Trinity came to this world with his glory to redeem common believers by the ‘total and eternal extinction and abolition of the active power of sin’.¹⁶ Because ‘every creature is made liable to sin, and will continue so, until they be gathered again into their Head which is Christ’, the incarnation was good news for all creatures and the fulfilment of creation.¹⁷

Through the Fall, human beings came to know good and evil, like ‘one of Us’, which was Christ (Gen. 3:22). It was the Godhead’s will to save humanity through ‘one of Us’ who knew good and evil. The Godhead’s manifestation took the form of man with sinful flesh, for Irving, in order to restore the relationship with the first Adam and His own glory also.

In man, God was to find the justification of his holiness, and the upholding of it for ever. He was made for this very end, to body forth God completely in all the features and powers of his invisible Godhead.¹⁸

As God created this world out of nothing – *ex nihilo* – and humankind was created in the Creator’s image, Irving stressed that every rational person should apprehend both the

¹³ Irving, *The Parable of the Sower* in *CW*, I, 75.

¹⁴ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in *CW*, V, 10.

¹⁵ In explaining the mystery of the Lamb slain Irving illustrated several biblical verses: Rev. 13:8; John 17:24; 1 Peter 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:4. (*CW*, V, 11f)

¹⁶ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in *CW*, V, 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 99.

¹⁸ Irving, *Christ’s Holiness in Flesh*, 116.

nothingness of their substance and the absoluteness of their dependence upon the Divine will.¹⁹ In this sense his concept of man was intimately connected to the work of the Holy Spirit, just as his view of the activity of Christ was inseparable from the work of the Holy Spirit. Man was created as the pathway through which Christ would come into the world. Likewise, the work of the Spirit was manifested through the image of God in all Human beings. As Christ was incarnated by the Spirit and glorified by the same Spirit, all humanity should depend upon the Spirit, and worship and glorify Christ through the same Spirit.

Irving portrayed God's main purpose in creating man as follows:

The purpose of God in creating man was the manifestation and communication of His own glory unto the creatures which He had made, or which He was about to make; and to bring the creature wholly to depend upon Him, and to worship Him.²⁰

As Christ was generated by the Spirit and had spiritual life, common believers can also have spiritual life; 'for as he lived by the Father, we live by him [Christ]'.²¹

A.2. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Man

Irving's theological attitude to the supernatural manifestations was foreshadowed not only in his view of humanity but also in his teaching on Baptism, both of which had a firm Christological background. His exploration of the sacrament of Baptism, moreover, contributed to his idea of gifts from God, expressed in his *Homilies on Baptism*.

By faith, common believers receive the remission of sins and the imputed righteousness of Christ, and by the sacrament of baptism they enter into a new covenant and receive the indwelling righteousness of the Holy Spirit.²² The Spirit's indwelling in common believers works, according to Irving, as a seal of their faith; it was an emblem ensuring to the

¹⁹ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in *CW*, V, 238.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 238.

²¹ Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 39.

²² Irving, *Homilies on Baptism* in *CW*, II, 273.

Christian, who had a sinful nature but was now bound to Christ; ‘the possession of the Holy Spirit is your prerogative in Christ, if the possession of a sinful nature was your birth curse in Adam’.²³ Irving thought the indwelling Spirit could, indeed should, reveal itself through certain manifestations in common believers. He questioned the contemporary understanding of ‘And ye shall receive the Holy Ghost (Act 2:38)’ merely as an ‘inward gift of sanctification and fruitfulness’, rather, he claimed, it should also be a form of the ‘outward gift of power’.

I cannot find by what writ of God any part of the spiritual gift was irrevocably removed from the Church. I see, indeed, that she hath lost the power which heretofore made her terrible as an army with banners; so also hath she lost the bright and glorious raiment which made her fair as the moon and clear as the sun; but why she may not hope, yea, assuredly believe, to have the former, when the Lord shall see it good, as well as the latter, is what I cannot see, the one being truly as supernatural a work of God as is the other.²⁴

Irving believed that all the ancient phenomena had taken place as the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which included the diverse operations described in 1 Cor. 12:7-11, and these phenomena could continue in his own days. He could not find any warrant in Scripture for believing that the gifts of the Spirit had been withdrawn, and no reason not to expect in the present day ‘the whole gift with which at any time it hath pleased God to endow His Church’.

In the first ages, the faith of the Church being perfect, her possession of the earnest of the Spirit was great: her expectation and her prayer being great, her answer and her receipt was great: but as she abused the day-spring which arose upon her from on high, and employed the glory of the morning in idle and unprofitable and wicked works; not valuing the gift of pure and holy light, of warm and vigorous life; the Lord from time to time withdraw His talents, and sentenced her to that poverty under which we now behold her.²⁵

It was, claimed Irving, the apostasy of the present-day church that hindered the manifestation of the supernatural gift of the Spirit. He thought that the contemporary

²³ Ibid, 275.

²⁴ Ibid, 276.

²⁵ Ibid, 277.

churches were in a 'state of impotency, like that of unholiness'. 'All who have been baptized', he maintained, 'were baptized unto the fullness of the spiritual gifts ... the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gift of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kind of tongues, or the interpretation of tongues'.²⁶ These are the signs of the Spirit's presence, that is, 'the outward sign of a particular inward operation of the Spirit upon the soul'.

As Jesus Christ received the Spirit through perfect faith in the Father, common believers could have the indwelling Spirit through faith in Him. For Irving, faith was vital for the manifestation of the Spirit, and faith was the gift of the Father; 'without faith no gift can be apprehended or appropriated'.²⁷ Through his exploration of the sacraments, Irving came to believe that the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit could occur in the present day.

B. Manifestations in the West of Scotland

In the spring of 1830, as Irving was coming under severe criticism for his Christological doctrines, he learned of 'apostolic news' from Scotland. It was the beginning of a charismatic movement that emerged on the Gareloch, on the southern edge of the Western Highlands, and would soon spread, eventually reaching Irving's congregation at Regent Square.

B.1. The Initial Manifestations

One Sunday evening at the end of March 1830, a young Scottish woman, Mary Campbell, who resided in Fernicarry, on the Gareloch, broke forth in an unknown tongue in the middle

²⁶ Ibid, 278.

²⁷ Ibid, 279f.

of a prayer for the restoration of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Mary had recently lost her sister, Isabella Campbell, to tuberculosis. Isabella had lived such a saintly life and faced her death with such Christian resignation that her home attracted pilgrims after her death.²⁸ Mary was also suffering from tuberculosis and believed that her own death was approaching. Now, suddenly, she felt possessed by a supernatural power.

Across the Clyde, in Port-Glasgow, Margaret Macdonald, an acquaintance of the Campbell sisters, was seriously ill. She was deep in meditation, and was said to observe that ‘there will be a mighty baptism of the Spirit this day’.²⁹ When her brothers, the twins James and George, who owned a shipyard, came home for dinner, she addressed them at great length, concluding with a solemn prayer for James that he might be endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost. Almost instantly, James calmly said, ‘I have got it’, and walked to the window, where he stood silent for a minute or two. Then, he went to his sister’s bedside and addressed her with the words of the twentieth of Psalm, ‘Arise, and stand upright’. He repeated the words, took her by the hand, and she arose. Margaret had recovered from her illness. James suddenly thought about Mary Campbell, who was also seriously ill and, it was feared, approaching death. He immediately wrote to Mary, describing her sister’s experience and conveying the same command.

My dear Sister, Lift up your voice with us; let us exalt His name, for He hath done great things for us, and Holy is His name. There is still power in the name of Jesus – yea, all power in heaven and on earth. Our beloved Margaret hath been made to hear His voice, and to rise up, leap, and walk. Faith in His name has given her soundness in the presence of us all. Mary, my love, lay aside unbelief, it is of the devil; hear God’s voice to you also, ‘Rise up and walk, what hindereth? ... we have seen great things to-day, for Jesus, through such a worm as I am, spoke to our well-beloved Margaret, and she is now quite well; and I am assured that this is only the beginning of miracles.’³⁰

²⁸ Robert Story, *Peace in Believing: A Memoir of Isabella Campbell of Fernicarry, Rosneath, Dunbartonshire* (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1829).

²⁹ Robert Norton, *Memories of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow* (London: John F. Shaw, 1840), 107.

³⁰ Letter from James Macdonald to Mary Campbell, March [April?] 1830, in T. Erskine, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ed. W. Hanna (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877), 178.

Mary Campbell was suffering acute chest pain and breathlessness, and her condition was such that nobody expected her recovery. But she had assured her visitors that ‘they would see and hear of miracles very soon’.³¹ And shortly after she received the letter from James Macdonald, Mary declared herself healed. As she described the event:

I received our dear brother James Macdonald’s letter, giving me an account of his sister’s having been raised, and commanding me to rise and walk. I had scarcely read the first page when I became quite overpowered, and laid it aside for a few minutes; but I had no rest in my spirit until I took it up again and began to read. As I read, every word came with power, but when I came to the command to arise, it came home with a power which no words can describe; it was felt to be indeed the voice of Christ; it was such a voice of power as could not be resisted. A mighty power was instantaneously exerted upon me. I first felt as if I had been lifted up from off the earth, and all my diseases taken off me.³²

B.2. The Background of the Manifestations

Before these incidents of the west of Scotland, there had been several similar cases, which had been reported to Irving via various routes. James Grubb, ‘the son of a poor and pious weaver’ in Row was a devout man who spent sleepless nights often with ‘a light on his bed in searching the word of God’: ‘His bible was his constant companion’.³³ Irving saw him as ‘a saint of the first degree’.³⁴ While Grubb was lying ill, he too experienced the assurance of salvation, ‘filling his whole soul with peace and joy in believing’. Grubb’s pious life attracted many people and ‘his bed-side was the school of Christ to many’.³⁵ Irving had once contacted Grubb while on his preaching tour in that area and he received regular reports

³¹ A. Robertson, *A Vindication of the Religion of the Land from Misrepresentation and an Exposure of the Absurd Pretensions of the Gareloch Enthusiasts*, in *A Letter to Thomas Erskine, Esq* (Edinburgh: W. Whyte, 1830), 254.

³² Ibid; *Greenock Advertiser* 11 Jun, 1830.

³³ Norton, *Memories of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow*, 65.

³⁴ Irving, ‘Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts’, *Fraser’s Magazine* (January 1832), 757.

³⁵ Norton, *Memories of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow*, 67.

about Grubb from a deacon of his church. After Grubb's death, the pious atmosphere of the district did not diminish.

In Port-Glasgow, the brothers James and George Macdonald and their sisters all experienced conversion in the spring of 1828.³⁶ They spent most of their leisure time in studying the Scriptures and prayer. Although his doctrinal knowledge was limited, James was impressed by the verse 'My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus'. Both brothers embraced the ideas of Christ's real humanity, Christ's millennial advent, and the perpetuity of the miraculous endowments in the church.

According to Robert Norton, it was not the case that the Macdonalds received some teachings from either McLeod Campbell or Irving; 'if they did adopt peculiar views of divine truth, it was from no heretical writings or preaching but from the bible alone that they derived them'.³⁷ They had never read a single volume of Irving's work, and they had not attended McLeod Campbell's services—although, Norton observed, 'after a time they began to attend the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Campbell of Row'.³⁸ The Macdonalds learned of the teachings of Irving and McLeod Campbell after Row Heresy trial, but they did not entirely agree with them.

While Alexander (Sandy) Scott, a probationer minister in the Church of Scotland, was spending time at his father's house in Greenock in 1829, he visited Mary Campbell and discussed with her ideas regarding regeneration and the baptism with the Holy Ghost. Scott tried to convince her of the distinction between the two subjects, that the former comes from the Incarnation and the latter from the glorification of the Son of God, but she was reluctant to agree with him. He then left Mary with a recommendation that she read over the Acts of the Apostles. In December 1829, after she had read chapters fourteen to sixteen of John's gospel, Mary Campbell became convinced that the human nature of Christ was the same as

³⁶ Ibid, 56.

³⁷ Ibid, 59.

³⁸ Ibid.

other human nature and that it was the active operation of the Holy Spirit that upheld

Christ's holiness. Irving later described this with his usual enthusiasm:

She saw the truth of our Lord's human nature, which in itself was no other than our own, and derived the virtues of immaculate holiness and superhuman power from no passive quality, but from an active operation thereon of the Son of God by the Holy Spirit. She came to see what for six or seven years I had been preaching in London, that all the works of Christ were done by the man anointed with the Holy Ghost, and not by the God mixing himself up with the man. ... the end of the whole mystery of his incarnation is to show unto mortal men what every one of them, through faith in his name, shall be able to perform; as it is written in the first of these chapters, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works which I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).³⁹

She was preoccupied by this discovery. A verse in Peter's sermon to Cornelius⁴⁰ left her convinced that 'if Jesus as a man in my nature thus spake and thus performed mighty works by the Holy Ghost, which he even promiseth to me, then ought I in the same nature, by the same Spirit, to do likewise "the works which he did, and greater works than these"' .⁴¹

Mary Campbell's views on the human nature of Christ led her to a conviction that miraculous power would be restored in true believers. In a letter to Irving in January 1830, Mary said she expected to see the same signs and wonders that Christ had, as described in Mark 16: 17, 18, 'through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ and the presence of the Comforter'.⁴²

The people who were involved in the west Scotland manifestations had little theological background apart from what they heard in sermons.⁴³ Rather, the Bible was their main source. 'They have no fanciful theology of their own: they make no pretensions to deep knowledge: they are the very opposite of sectarians, both in conduct and principle: they do not assume to be teachers: they are not deeply read, but seek to be taught of God in the

³⁹ Irving, 'Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts', 757.

⁴⁰ How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (Acts 10:38).

⁴¹ Irving, 'Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts', 757.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ R. Norton, *Memories of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow*, 58.

perusal of and meditation on his revealed Word, and to live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty'.⁴⁴

B.3. After the Manifestations

The news of the manifestations spread around the area. George and James Macdonald began speaking in 'tongues' in unknown gibberish and also interpreted. Mary Campbell, staying the summer of 1830 at Helensburgh on the Firth of Clyde, also began writing in unknown tongues; 'When the moment of inspiration came Mary seized the pen, and with a rapidity "like lightning" covered sheets of papers with characters believed to be letters and words'.⁴⁵ Crowds gathered around Mary Campbell and the Macdonalds in Port-Glasgow and observed the manifestations with curiosity. Campbell also claimed the gift of prophecy and it was said that 'merchants, divinity students [and] ... gentlemen who rank high in society' arrived in Helensburgh and asked her about 'the meaning of certain passages of Scripture'.⁴⁶

Margaret Macdonald's elder sister wrote on 18 May 1830 that 'ever since Margaret was raised and the gift of tongues given, the house has been filled every day with people from all parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland'.⁴⁷ Chalmers, who heard of Mary Campbell's alleged writing in an unknown language, asked Robert Story of Roseneath to examine carefully the truth of her claim. After visiting Campbell, Story assured Chalmers that 'both in speaking and in writing she described her words and movements as in every respect independent of her own volition', and confirmed that 'these things are of God and not of men'.⁴⁸ Chalmers, however, was not convinced.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 148.

⁴⁵ Erskine, *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, 179.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Norton, *Memories of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow*, 125.

⁴⁸ Story, *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story*, 209, 212.

C. Irving's Attention and Its Theological Support

C.1. Reports and Responses

The news from the west of Scotland delighted Irving. For him, the mediation of the Holy Spirit was an essential element in Christian life.⁴⁹ He believed that Christ's earthly ministry had been an example for the Christian life. Since 'Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever', Irving maintained, 'the same power of healing, and the same willingness to heal, which he put forth that night at the door of Peter's house to all the sick' could be exercised by 'the indiscriminate race of men'.⁵⁰

As Irving wrote in *Fraser's Magazine*, from the time of the opening of the National Scotch Church, he had believed that 'the baptised Church is still held by God to be responsible for the full and perfect gift of the Holy Ghost, as the same had been received by our blessed Lord upon his ascension unto glory, and by Him shed down upon his church on the day of Pentecost, and by them exercised in all the ways recorded in the book of Acts and the epistles of the holy apostles'.⁵¹ For him, spiritual gifts are not accidental or temporary occurrences, 'but substantial and permanent forms of operation proper to the Holy Ghost'. 'The disappearance of those endowments from the visible Church, or rather from the face of her history', Irving continued, 'was the evil heart of unbelief, and the hiding of "the light of the world" under "the bushel" of human systems and ordinances, and the "burying of our talent in the earth" of the natural man'.⁵²

Although Irving believed in theory in the continuation of spiritual gifts, he was not sure whether to preach about them because he also thought that because of human

⁴⁹ Irving's letter to Isabella, 22 Nov 1825, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 347.

⁵⁰ Irving, 'Christ the Example of Christian Life', in *Thirty Sermons*, 98f.

⁵¹ Irving, 'Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts', 754.

⁵² Ibid.

transgressions ‘we should have been adjudged to the loss of our inheritance until our Redeemer should come’.⁵³ Irving’s assistant minister in Regent Square at this time was Alexander Scott, who believed that ‘the spiritual gifts ought still to be exercised in the Church’.⁵⁴ Scott urged him to pray for the endowment of spiritual gifts, because believers had been ‘baptized into the assurance of the “gift of the Holy Ghost”, as well as of “repentance and remission of sins” (Acts, ii. 38)’.⁵⁵ Irving found this argument ‘unanswerable’, and he began teaching that ‘the Holy Ghost ought to be manifested amongst us all, the same as ever he was in any one of the primitive churches’.⁵⁶

The incidents in the west of Scotland convinced Irving all the more of the continual endowment of spiritual gifts: ‘The substance of Mary Campbell’s and Margaret Macdonald’s visions or revelations, given in their papers, carry to me a spiritual conviction and a spiritual reproof which I cannot express.’⁵⁷ Theologically, Mary Campbell’s understanding of Christ’s humanity was of remarkable significance to Irving in that it contained ‘the true view of bodily suffering as a manifestation of Satan’s power in this sinful flesh of ours, which Christ took in order to cast him and keep him out of it’, which was Irving’s main theme in *The Temptation*.⁵⁸ Of more striking effect on Irving was what Campbell understood concerning miraculous wonders as a consequence of Christ’s humanity. These, he became convinced, were the work of the Holy Ghost.

The news about ‘supernatural gifts’ in Scotland had been continuously reported to Irving by his friends in the district. In order to gather still more information, a group from Irving’s area, led by John Bate Cardale, a solicitor who was a member of Baptist W. Noel’s congregation at St. John’s, Bedford Row, spent three weeks in the area around Port-

⁵³ Ibid., 756.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Irving’s letter dated 2 June 1830, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 139.

⁵⁸ Irving, ‘Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts’, 758.

Glasgow. They issued a report on 16 November 1830 and it was published under Cardale's name in the *Morning Watch*. The report gave particular attention to the 'tongues':

The mode of proceeding is for each person who takes a part, first to read a Psalm in metre, which is sung by the meeting; then a chapter from the Bible; and he then prays ... He then, in the course of prayer, began speaking in an unknown tongue; and after speaking for some time, he sung, or rather chaunted, in the same tongue. He then rose, and we all rose with him; and in a very loud voice, and with great solemnity, he addressed us in the same tongue for a considerable time ... The meeting concluded with a psalm, a chapter, and prayer from another gentleman.⁵⁹

The 'gifted persons' claimed that their organs of speech were used by the Spirit of God. After observing the phenomena, Cardale was convinced that the gifted persons were 'living in close communion with God, and in love towards Him ... having an abhorrence of sin, and a thirst for holiness, with an abasement of self and yet with a hope full of immortality'. Cardale could not discern anything like fanaticism or enthusiasm among the 'gifted'; on the contrary, he thought them to be persons of great simplicity of character and the 'very opposite of sectarians'.⁶⁰

Erskine of Linlathen also arrived in Port-Glasgow, staying for six weeks and taking part in Macdonalds' daily prayer meetings. He presented his positive views of the manifestations in a pamphlet, *On the Gifts of the Spirit*, which was published in late 1830.

Whilst I see nothing in Scripture against the re-appearance, or rather the continuance of miraculous gifts in the church, but a great deal for it, I must further say that I see a great deal of internal evidence in the West Country, to prove their genuine miraculous character, especially in the speaking with tongues.⁶¹

About the alleged gift of tongues exercised in the Macdonald family, Erskine noted that 'it certainly is not a thing to be lightly or rashly believed, but neither is it a thing to be lightly or rashly rejected'. After careful, first-hand observation, Erskine believed that the

⁵⁹ John B. Cardale, 'On the Extraordinary Manifestations in Port-Glasgow', *MW*, II (December, 1830), 870.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 873.

⁶¹ T. Erskine, *On the Gifts of the Spirit* (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1830), 14f.

manifestations were of God. Therefore, he thought that if someone condemned the Macdonalds as impostors, they would be contending against God.⁶²

Erskine rebuked the opponents for their ‘shallow knowledge of God’. Knowing God ‘merely as an abstraction’, they could not recognize Him as the living God, and this brought Christianity to ‘a very low ebb’.⁶³ Erskine’s views on Christ’s humanity led him to a belief in the possibility of supernatural gifts.

Christ hath become one flesh with you, that you might become one spirit with Him. He hath tabernacled in your nature, - He is in you as the root is in the branch. He is your Head, for “the head of every man is Christ,” - and the favour of God which rests on the Head, descends to the vilest partaker of the one flesh. The knowledge of the love of your God, who has thus desired that you should have fellowship with Him in the spirit of holiness, and who has tasted death for you, to destroy in you the spirit of unholiness - is everlasting life.⁶⁴

The Revd Edward Craig responded to Erskine’s views with a pamphlet that also appeared in 1830. Craig criticised Erskine for accusing opponents of the manifestations of being weak in their Christian faith; if Erskine insisted that people either had to believe in these strange manifestations or be atheists, many would prefer to be atheists.⁶⁵ Concerning the supposed writings in unknown tongues, Craig maintained that they were not of any language known in the world, and as evidence he quoted a letter from Professor Samuel Lee of Cambridge University, one of the first oriental scholars in Great Britain. According to Lee,

I can now only say, that whatever it contains ... must for ever remain a mystery to me ... My opinion is, that it contains neither character nor language known in any region under the sun: and this, without laying claim to any miraculous powers, I will venture to predict, will turn out to be the fact.⁶⁶

⁶² Ibid., 20.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 21f. About Erskine’s ideas of humanity of Christ, see D.1.a, this chapter.

⁶⁵ Edward Craig, *A Letter to Thomas Erskine, ESQ. in reply to His Recent Pamphlet in Vindication of the West Country Miracles* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1830), 3f.

⁶⁶ A letter from Professor Samuel Lee on 19 May 1830, in E. Craig, *A Letter to Thomas Erskine*, 9; *Greenock Advertiser*, 2 July 1830.

Craig observed that the Apostles had not laid stress on these miraculous powers in their ministry. While Erskine claimed that miraculous powers were given expressly 'for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ', Craig argued that Christ gave 'some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints'.⁶⁷

Craig attacked Erskine's pamphlet for containing considerable 'rashness' which could lead to the reader's belief being baffled. His pamphlet finished with a warning against Erskine's hastiness, saying 'If you lightly and inconsistently direct the attention of the multitude to seek for a confirmation of the truth by miraculous testimony, which is not in the economy of God to vouchsafe, you may impede the simple belief of the gospel testimony; you may confirm the ready scepticism of the natural heart; you may ruin souls; but their blood will be required at your hand'.⁶⁸

C.2. Irving's Domestic Life

While Irving was responding to the news of the manifestations in Scotland, his household was in deep distress over the illness of another child, Samuel. During Samuel's prolonged illness, the household was unable to offer hospitality to visitors. Irving hoped for a miracle that would enable the infant to recover. But, the miracle did not happen. The child died on 6 July 1830.

Irving's relationship with Chalmers also weakened, partly due to their different viewpoints. Despite Irving's several letters asking support for his doctrine of the person of Christ, Chalmers 'preserved unbroken silence'.⁶⁹ When Chalmers visited London in May 1830, he gave several sermons in the National Scotch Church and visited Samuel Coleridge

⁶⁷ Craig, *A Letter to Thomas Erskine*, 24.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶⁹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 119.

together with Irving. His ‘half-wondering, half-amusing’ attitude to Irving of seven years ago had changed into a worried eye on Irving who ‘had left the safe limits of ecclesiastical restraint’, which had made their relationship become more estranged. In his letters to Chalmers, Irving had tried to persuade him to understand his doctrine by recommending *The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord’s Human Nature, Tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith*, and wanted to get sympathy about the news from the west of Scotland.⁷⁰ However, Irving received neither any understanding nor any support from Chalmers.

‘If he [Chalmers] had been a man of more independent, courageous, and clear-sighted vision than he was’, according to John Tulloch, ‘he might have done something to stay these proceedings, or guide them to a more lenient result’.⁷¹ It might be also true that had he actively defended Irving, Erskine, and McLeod Campbell, Chalmers would have forfeited his leading career. The Herschell affair, as Stewart Brown observes, deprived Chalmers’ ‘confidence and moral comfort’ for Irving.⁷² Chalmers’ close and ‘almost paternal’ relationship with Irving, in St. John’s, had neither moved him to help nor against the proceedings of Irving and his associates.

In the middle of the growing controversy surrounding Irving’s Christology and the charismatic phenomena, Irving took a short holiday in Ireland. However, he did not stop working, and his wife, Isabella, worried about his health. His preaching in Dublin attracted huge crowds even though there were growing concerns about his orthodoxy; one Irish newspaper reported that ‘the place of worship was not only crowded to suffocation, but several hundreds assembled outside on benches placed for their accommodation in the yard’.⁷³ A month later, Irving and his family returned to London.

⁷⁰ Irving to Thomas Chalmers, 2 June 1830, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 138f.

⁷¹ John Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century* (Longmans, 1885), 162.

⁷² See, Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 213-218.

⁷³ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 18 Sept. 1830, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 151.

C.3. The Church, with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power

Upon hearing the reports on the manifestations in the west of Scotland, Irving prepared an article on the subject, which he published in the September 1830 issue of *The Morning Watch*. He developed his ideas about spiritual gifts in a tract, *The Church, with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power*, in which he explored the connection between the spiritual gifts and his Christology.

As ‘the Church in flesh’ was the medium of communication between God and the world, Irving maintained, common believers had a sign that they were ‘in real uninterrupted union with Him’ when they held ‘a real power under Him’.⁷⁴ He insisted on the endowment of the power of the Spirit into the present church as described in Mark 16: 17, 18 and 1 Cor. 12. These miracles should be performed ‘in the name of Christ, and by the power of God’, since all the gifts proceed from one Spirit, administered by one Lord.⁷⁵ It was a mystery of redemption, for Irving, that God would take ‘a complete organ of expression and of action’ by which ‘His own infinite being’ had been truly and fully expressed.⁷⁶ In this sense, he regarded ‘the miracle-workers in the Church’ as ‘Christ’s hand’.⁷⁷

Through his close observation of the gift of the tongues, Irving noted that ‘the work of Christ in the flesh is for all men, and that He wisheth it to be published to all men’.⁷⁸ It was Irving’s conviction, derived from his idea of the person of Christ, that by sharing the same human body as Christ common believers could share the gifts that came from the Spirit. Because Christ had taken on human ‘sinful flesh’, in Irving’s thinking, believers could receive the power that was manifested through Christ. The gift of tongues represented ‘the

⁷⁴ Irving, *The Church, with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power*, in *CW*, V, 454, 465.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 467, 469.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 470.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 480.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 491.

unity of Christ and His members'.⁷⁹ The spiritual power exercised by the faithful testified to Christ's 'work of humiliation and exaltation'.⁸⁰ In Irving's mind, this represented the doctrine of the believer's union with Christ, manifested in the form of shared spiritual gifts, based on sharing the same humanity and the same Spirit. Through the work of the Spirit, common believers could be holy as Christ was holy.

According to Irving, the Godhead continually acted in Christ's soul, which had human limitations. Christ's soul was now out of this world, but it still worked in believers through the Holy Spirit. The faithful demonstrated that they were of 'one substance with Christ ... by His using their organs in a way in which they themselves are not able to do'.⁸¹ The unknown tongues, in Irving's understanding, were manifestations of the Spirit speaking to God, not to men.

Christ was the prototype of a perfect and holy man under the conditions of the Fall, that we, under those conditions, might know there was power and will in God that we should all be perfect and holy.⁸²

If Adam was the prototype of Christ, in Irving's understanding, Christ was the prototype of the morally obedient man. The gift of tongues, Irving continued, belonged 'to the dispensation of the Holy Ghost proceeding from the risen Christ', and reflected the notion that 'man is the dwelling-place of God'.⁸³ The outpouring of the spiritual gifts from believers, Irving believed, showed that a human being could become 'God's temple'.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Ibid., 492.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 493.

⁸² Ibid., 498.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 499.

D. Theological Consensus among Irving's Friends

D.1. Doctrines Derived from Christ's Genuine Humanity

Irving's friends in Scotland shared and developed related theological issues. As we have seen, McLeod Campbell, Thomas Erskine, Sandy Scott had come to the doctrine of universal atonement through their independent biblical speculation, and they subsequently accepted Irving's idea of Christ's genuine humanity. Irving's teaching provided one basis for their developing connection. This in turn led to other shared ideas, such as the Pentecostal phenomenon and the Millennium.

Thomas Erskine

Thomas Erskine of Linlathen had first studied Irving's prophetic works while he was staying in Rome in 1827. He was sympathetic to Irving's views, as he noted in a letter to Chalmers:

I have met here with Irving's book upon the Prophecies. I don't suppose that any mere interpreter of prophecy has ever before assumed such a tone of confidence and authority. I am a little surprised that the fate of former interpretation has not warned him. He is scarcely meek enough. He seems to intend to brave and insult such of his readers as hesitate about yielding their entire consent; but it is a magnificent book, full of honest zeal.⁸⁵

Erskine shared Irving's millenarian beliefs and confessed in his letter to Chalmers that 'I am almost a believer in the nearness of the end ... I desire to look and wait for the coming of the Lord, and to long for his appearing'.⁸⁶ Indeed, Erskine thought that he was living 'on the eve of a tremendous catastrophe', and 'our blessed Lord is himself to appear on earth in

⁸⁵ 'T. Erskine to T. Chalmers, Rome, 19 April 1827', in *Letters*, vol. I, 110. See also 'Erskine to Miss C. Erskine, Rome, 12 April 1827', in *Letters*, vol. I, 109.

⁸⁶ 'T. Erskine to T. Chalmers, Rome, 19 April 1827', in *Letters*, vol. I, 111.

forty years'. Influenced by Irving's writings, Erskine was expecting the Second Advent; 'Our eyes shall be opened from the dust of death to behold Him'.⁸⁷

There seems not to have been much personal exchange between Erskine and Irving.

Erskine later confessed that he did not know Irving well:

I knew Irving a little, but not enough to be able to give much help towards such a work as Mrs. Oliphant is undertaking... Carlyle and Scott knew him well, and have very living portraits of him in their own hearts, Scott cannot speak of him without becoming Irving in voice and manner, even in countenance.⁸⁸

None the less, Erskine was influenced by Irving's writings both on prophecy and Christology.

John McLeod Campbell

McLeod Campbell was attracted to the Spirit manifestations in their initial stage. The day after the Macdonalds had begun speaking in tongues, he visited them out of curiosity and observed the phenomenon. Appealing to the precept in 1 Cor. 14:13, 'let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret', he asked for an interpretation of the strange sounds and George Macdonald interpreted his brother's words to mean, 'Behold He cometh, Jesus cometh'.⁸⁹ McLeod Campbell wrote favourably to Chalmers about the West of Scotland phenomena, expressing his opinion that the spiritual gifts of Pentecost should be present in the Church in all ages: 'I see equal reason for the existence of these gifts in the church at any period of its history'.⁹⁰ His view of the charismatic gifts was inseparable from his idea of Christ's genuine humanity. The dwelling of the Holy Spirit was an essential element in a

⁸⁷ 'T. Erskine to Miss C. Erskine, Rome, 12 April 1827', in *Letters*, I, 109.

⁸⁸ 'T Erskine to F.D.Maurice, 15 Nov 1860', in *Letters* II, 134f.

⁸⁹ Norton, *Memories of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow*, 111.

⁹⁰ 'McLeod Campbell to Thomas Chalmers on 28 April 1830', New College Library, TCP, CHA.4.134.21.

believer's union with Christ, and was also present to 'manifest and put forth all power, wherever men by faith call for the exercise of his gifts'.⁹¹

According to N. Needham, 'from the outset the charismatic movement and the Rowite theology of universal grace were inextricably linked'.⁹² However, many contemporary religious thinkers could not accept that the phenomena were divine manifestations. The leading Church of Scotland evangelical, Andrew Thomson, wrote to his brother that 'the folks are actually mad. In this marvellous thing many believe – a writer to the signet, an advocate, Thomas Erskine himself, Rev. Mr Campbell of Row, it is said, and foolish girls and old women innumerable. Is not all this most melancholy?'.⁹³

However, as the centre of the Spirit movement moved from the West of Scotland to Irving's congregation, McLeod Campbell's interest decreased. Some embarrassing incidents in Regent Square and the inconsistent behaviour of members of Irving's congregation caused McLeod Campbell to shift his attention from the spiritual gifts to other subjects such as 'atonement'. But this does not mean McLeod Campbell ceased to believe that the gifts were from God. Rather, he continued to hold that supernatural gifts were part of Christian life: 'miracles, prophecy, and all the supernatural connected with Christianity, must be regarded as a part of what it is'.⁹⁴ Campbell interpreted the charismata as reflecting an individual believer's personal relationship with God.⁹⁵

Alexander J. Scott

⁹¹ McLeod Campbell, *Two Sermons*, vii.

⁹² Needham, *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, 277.

⁹³ Haldane, *The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of His Brother, James Alexander Haldane*, 570.

⁹⁴ McLeod Campbell's letter to his eldest son dated 5 February 1865 in Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, II, 80.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

As the son of Dr John Scott, ‘one of the most esteemed of the elder ministers of the Church [of Scotland]’, Sandy Scott was brought up in Westminster Calvinism.⁹⁶ But some of his father’s teachings, among them his views on the Holy Spirit, were unusual for the time. Dr Scott encouraged the parishioners of the Middle Parish, Greenock, to ‘go to school to the Holy Spirit’.⁹⁷ ‘Scott’s father yearned for the life and dynamism of the Spirit which would bring the Church into living and personal communion with God’.⁹⁸

Sandy Scott’s played a role in spreading news of the Port Glasgow charismatic manifestations. He convinced McLeod Campbell and Irving that the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit should be continued in the present. McLeod Campbell confessed that he had been so struck by Scott’s thoughts on the Spirit that he decided to preach on the subject on the first Sunday of the new year 1828, encouraging his people to pray for an ‘abundant outpouring’.⁹⁹

Scott received a call to the Scottish church at Woolwich, on the South Bank of the Thames, and Irving urged Scott to accept the call. In February 1830 Scott formally accepted the offer and applied for ordination. At request of the Presbytery of London, Scott delivered a series of trial sermons, and these soon aroused criticisms.¹⁰⁰ Later, Irving observed that Scott’s trial sermons ‘proceeded with approbation till they came to this question of our Lord’s nature, and there they stuck fast’.¹⁰¹ In the ensuing controversy, Irving strenuously defended Scott.¹⁰² To examine Scott’s ideas on the person of Christ, a committee was set up which produced a formula concerning Christ’s humanity. Scott’s case brought Irving’s unorthodox views to the attention of the London Presbytery.

⁹⁶ D. Brown, ‘Personal Reminiscences of Edward Irving’, *The Expositor* 3rd series, vol 6 (London, 1887), 219.

⁹⁷ *Dr. J. Scott*, 447, cited in J. Philip Newell, ‘A. J. Scott and His Circle’ (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1981), 20.

⁹⁸ Newell, ‘A. J. Scott and His Circle’, 20.

⁹⁹ Donald Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1877), I, 43, 48.

¹⁰⁰ A report of the London Presbytery meetings on 20 April 1830, quoted from Newell, ‘A. J. Scott and His Circle’, 82.

¹⁰¹ Irving, *Christ’s Holiness in Flesh*, xvi.

¹⁰² Jones, *Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Edward Irving*, 261.

D.2. The Resolute Stance of the Church of Scotland

D.2.a. Irving's London Presbytery Case

When the committee considering Scott's case produced its formula, some members of Presbytery who disagreed with Irving's Christology thought that 'they had struck at the very root of Irving's peculiar sentiments', and hoped that Irving would preach 'a sounder and more wholesome doctrine'.¹⁰³ But Irving would not relent.

In response, the Presbytery called on Irving in order to examine his ideas, especially those expressed in *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*. Irving now withdrew himself from the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of London, claiming that he was not under the authority of the presbytery of London. Instead, he was considering appealing his case 'to the Church of Scotland, who alone have rightful authority over me and my flock'.¹⁰⁴ On 15 December 1830, the members of the National Scotch Church issued a statement supporting their minister's stance on Christology; they could not 'remain silent under the heavy charges that are brought against us, whether from ignorance, misapprehension, or wilful perversion of the truth', and they confirmed their belief that Christ 'in the days of His flesh was holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth' and that through 'the Eternal Spirit', He 'offered Himself without spot to God'. In this offering, 'He made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in our behalf'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Hair, *Regent Square*, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, xix.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 96. This declaration was made by the Kirk-Session (a large part of the trustees) and signed by, E. Irving, David Brown (Missionary; Sandy Scott's successor), five Elders, and six Deacons.

An author in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* denounced this declaration ‘as one of the most dishonest productions I have ever had the misfortune and misery to peruse’.¹⁰⁶ Across Britain, antagonism to Irving’s doctrine of the person of Christ was growing.

D.2.b. General Assembly 1831

In the Church of Scotland, there was a sense that the new theological views of Irving, McLeod Campbell, Scott and others were threatening to undermine the orthodoxy of the Westminster Confession. In the General Assembly of 1831, a number of ministers were deposed.

Row Heresy

McLeod Campbell preached about the Fatherly love of God and revealed his idea of universal atonement which he had found through exploring the Scriptures. A shorthand writer regularly took down his sermons, and, from the summer of 1827, after a report of Row sermons was carried up to Glasgow, opposition to Campbell’s teaching was aroused.¹⁰⁷ The General Assembly of 1830 instructed the presbytery of Dumbarton to proceed against him. The libel of the Row case alleged that McLeod Campbell taught doctrines contrary to the Scriptures and the Confession of Faith. Campbell’s case came before the General Assembly, via the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, and the trial was held on 24 May 1831.¹⁰⁸ After a long debate, the Assembly deposed him at 6:15 in the next morning by a vote of 119 to 6,

¹⁰⁶ ‘Rev. Edward Irving’s Newspaper Declaration’, in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, Vol. 30. (January 1831), 19.

¹⁰⁷ McLeod Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 19f.

¹⁰⁸ On these cases, see the ‘Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1831’, in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* Vol. 30. (June 1831). See chapter I, B.1.b, for a basic understanding of McLeod Campbell’s idea of universal atonement.

‘prohibiting and discharging him from exercising the same, or any part thereof, in all time coming’.¹⁰⁹

Hugh Baillie McLean

Hugh Baillie McLean’s case, which had been previously discussed at the 1830 General Assembly, came before the Assembly of 1831—the day after Campbell was deposed.

McLean was the minister of the Scots Church in London Wall. We can grasp McLean’s Christology and its resemblance with Irving’s idea of Christ’s sinful nature by referring to a letter he wrote to a friend:

I certainly believe and constantly teach that our blessed Lord, the consubstantial Son of the Eternal Father, did unite the divine nature to ruined, fallen, sin-accursed human nature, that He might make full atonement for transgression, and reconcile us unto God. I believe and teach that His human nature was the same as my own in all its essential properties; and whilst I believe and hang my dependence upon the blessed truth He was entirely and always without sin, I believe that this blessed fact was owing, not to any essential difference in the qualities and properties of His nature from the qualities and properties of mine, but only and certainly to the fact of the hypostatical union of the divine and human nature in his person, and the energizing presence of the Holy Ghost, who dwelt in Him from the moment of His conception in the womb of the blessed virgin, by whose aid also He performed all His works and actings in the human nature. And so firm is my belief in this essential article of the truth, that, by the grace of God, I will never alter, cancel, or deny it; no, not for all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.¹¹⁰

When McLean was presented to the parish church of Dreghorn in Ayrshire in 1830, the parishioners libelled him for his doctrine of Christ’s sinful flesh, which they believed he had learned from Irving. His ordination was suspended, even though Irving endeavoured to rescue him by publishing tracts in his favour.¹¹¹ Thomas Carlyle, Irving’s close friend who had co-written *The Doctrine Held by the Church of Scotland* with Irving, acted vigorously as McLean’s advocate, denouncing the accusers, saying ‘what was infinitely worse, the people

¹⁰⁹ ‘Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1831’, in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* Vol. 30 (June 1831), 447.

¹¹⁰ Hugh Baillie McLean’s letter to a friend, in Robert H. Story, *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story*, 186.

¹¹¹ See, chapter II, B.1.c.

of the land, superintended by pastors who feared to teach them any truth of God on which they looked strange; would retrograde in divine knowledge, grow poor in grace, and cold in love. Their bishop would be their slave, or puppet, not their father'.¹¹²

The final verdict was to declare him guilty of heresy on 25 May 1831, when the General Assembly unanimously agreed to deprive 'his licence as a probationer of the Church of Scotland, and of all right to administer religious ordinances'.¹¹³

Sandy Scott

In Sandy Scott's case, the issue shifted from the doctrine to the authority of the Confession. Scott had found that his theological beliefs deviated from the Westminster Confession and he refused to sign the Confession. While McLeod Campbell had said his doctrines were not contradicted by the Confession of Faith, Scott asserted that certain doctrines in the Confession were actually 'contrary to the Word of God'. He had three principal objections to the Confession. First, Scott could not agree that Christ had died for the sins of the elect only. Second, Scott rejected sabbatarianism, or the belief that the Sabbath and the Lord's day are identical. Third, he denied that church officers had the power to remit sins and open the kingdom of heaven for penitent Christians, as stated in chap. 30, section 2, of the Confession.¹¹⁴

The London Presbytery referred Scott's case to his home Presbytery of Paisley. When the Presbytery of Paisley declared Scott's refusal to sign the Westminster Confession as equivalent to a resignation of his licence, Scott appealed to the General Assembly. Irving strongly criticised the Presbytery's treatment of Scott, arguing that Scott was outside the

¹¹² Thomas Carlyle, *Substance of Notes from the Speech of Thomas Carlyle in behalf of the Rev. H. B. MacLean, Presented to the Parish of Dreghorn, Delivered at the Bar of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, 13th October, 1830* (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1830), 23.

¹¹³ 'Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1831', in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* Vol. 30 (June 1831), 449.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 455; Newell, 'A. J. Scott and His Circle', 131f.

Presbytery's jurisdiction.¹¹⁵ Scott appeared alone to argue his own case, and Messrs Geddes, Brown, and Menzies attended for the Presbytery. Scott's case was heard on 27 May 1831, and he claimed that 'when he became a licentiate of the Church, the Church pledged itself to him, that in any difference of doctrine, he should be tried by the Word of God, and not by any human standard whatever'.¹¹⁶

According to P. Newell, 'such a direct assault upon the theology of the Kirk's Confession was unprecedented within the National Church'.¹¹⁷ Scott maintained that while he differed from the Westminster Confession, he was willing to sign the old Scottish National Confession of John Knox. Although his speech was interrupted, Irving described it as 'one of the ablest, soundest, and most ecclesiastical speeches ever heard within their [Assembly] walls'.¹¹⁸ 'A simple difference from the Westminster Confession of Faith', Scott contended, 'was not a virtual resignation of his licence'. Then, he asked that 'if a man did not assent to every iota or title of the Confession of Faith, he was no longer to be considered as a minister or licentiate of the Church of Scotland?'¹¹⁹ The General Assembly unanimously found that 'as Mr. Alexander John Scott had voluntarily declared that he does not believe in the standards of the Church of Scotland, to which he professed his adherence when licensed, he cannot any longer continue a probationer of the Church of Scotland, and the General Assembly deprive him of his licence accordingly; and prohibit and discharge all the ministers of this church from receiving him into their pulpits'.¹²⁰ Scott later recalled

¹¹⁵ E. Irving, *A Judgement, As to What Course the Ministers and the People of the Church of Scotland Should Take in Consequence of the Decisions of the last General Assembly* (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1832), 33.

¹¹⁶ 'General Assembly, Case of Mr. Scott – Heresy', *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 May 1831.

¹¹⁷ Newell, 'A. J. Scott and His Circle', 131.

¹¹⁸ Irving, *A Judgement, As to What Course the Ministers and the People of the Church of Scotland Should Take in Consequence of the Decisions of the last General Assembly*, 36; John Hunter, 'Alexander Scott', *The Expositor* (8th series) vol 21. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1921), 398.

¹¹⁹ 'General Assembly, Case of Mr. Scott – Heresy', *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 May 1831.

¹²⁰ 'Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1831', in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* Vol. 30 (June 1831), 455.

concerning the unanimous decision to depose him that 'I was relieved indeed after years of inward struggle'.¹²¹

When the congregation of Woolwich heard the result of Scott's case in the 1831 General Assembly, 'a very influential and numerous band of adherents' withdrew from the Scots Church and moved with Scott to Providence Chapel in the New Road.¹²² There Scott continued his ministry until 1846, when he gradually diverted his efforts into socio-political and educational concerns, such as the improvement of the condition of the neglected and oft-oppressed British working classes of that time. Later he became the first principal of Owens College, later Manchester University, in 1851.

General Assembly Deliberations on Irving

The General Assembly also launched an attack on Irving for his doctrine of the person of Christ, based on *Report upon Books and Pamphlets containing Erroneous Opinions*, and approving a motion to the effect that if he should appear in Scotland, the Presbytery of the bounds should enquire whether Irving was the author of certain works and take the necessary action against him. They thought Irving's ideas were distinctive and 'if Mr. Irving was the author of these works, he should henceforth be held *ipso facto* no longer a licentiate of the Church'.¹²³ The similar doctrinal case of Hugh Baillie McLean was considered during the discussion and provided the need for immediate action against Irving.

The judgments of the 1831 General Assembly concerning Irving's friends gave 'general and great satisfaction' to their opponents. The *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* welcomed the results and asked for further action against Irving for his ideas on the person of Christ: 'Has the church which licensed and ordained him [Irving] no power at all to reach him? Has his residence in England given him a right to teach and preach as he please? And was the act of ordination that sent him beyond our borders, instead of any binding, no more

¹²¹ *The Daily News*, 26 May 1862.

¹²² Newell, 'A. J. Scott and His Circle', 177.

¹²³ 'General Assembly, The Irving Heresies', *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 June 1831.

than just, “loose him, and let him go””.¹²⁴ From Irving’s point of view, the 1831 General Assembly bore a threefold aspect; ‘one against God, another against the church, and a third against the dignities and rights of men’. He singled out ‘against God’ as the Assembly had decreed that God does not love every man, and that Christ had not died for every man. It was ‘against the church’ because it had found that church offices were not constituted under Christ, but under the Westminster synod of divines, and doctrine was determined not by the Holy Scriptures, but by the Westminster Confession of Faith. It was ‘against the dignities and rights of man’, Irving continued, for the Assembly had decided that ‘they may be violently taken away, without libel or probation, or sisting [sic] of the person, or sight of his accusers, or answer for himself, in one rapturous and riotous sederunt of his judges’.¹²⁵ However, Irving’s criticism served to widen the gap of trust between his mother church and Irving himself.

E. Tongues in London

E.1. The Manifestations and Resulting Chaos

Stories of the alleged miraculous phenomena in the West of Scotland spread to London, animating a part of Irving’s congregation. A London solicitor, John Bate Cardale, who had been to Gareloch to examine the ‘gifts of tongues’, returned to London fully convinced that the manifestations were from God; he now opened his house for weekly prayer meetings ‘with the simple object of asking for an outpouring of the Spirit’.¹²⁶ On 30 April 1831 at one of these weekly meetings, Mrs. Cardale ‘spoke with great solemnity in a tongue’, which she interpreted as meaning ‘The Lord will speak to His people – the Lord hasteneth His coming

¹²⁴ ‘Mr. Irving and the General Assembly’, in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, Vol. 30. (Sep. 1831), 604.

¹²⁵ Irving, *A Judgement, As to What Course the Ministers and the People of the Church of Scotland Should Take in Consequence of the Decisions of the last General Assembly*, 10.

¹²⁶ J. Hair, *Regent Square*, 104.

– the Lord cometh, the Lord cometh, the Lord cometh!’.¹²⁷ Soon Miss Hall, another member of the prayer group, sang in tongues. Irving wrote to Story of Roseneath, one of Irving’s friends from university time, that ‘Two of my flock have received the gift of tongues and prophecy. The Church here is to inquire into it’.¹²⁸

Two weeks before the General Assembly of 1831, Irving’s congregation began early morning prayer meetings for the Assembly to be guided by the Spirit of God, especially in the cases of Irving’s friends. The morning meeting started at half-past six and many of the congregation – sometimes nearly a thousand – attended. Despite their disappointment with the General Assembly of 1831, the meetings continued – this time for the outpouring of the apostolic gifts. Among Irving and his congregation, there was a growing expectation of a widespread revival of the charismata.

Irving believed that spiritual gifts were from God. In a letter to his father-in-law, Irving reported of the outpouring of spiritual gifts in his church: ‘He has raised up the order of prophets amongst us, who, being filled with the Holy Ghost, do speak with tongues and prophesy. I have no doubt on this; and I believe that if the ministers of the Church will be faithful to preach the truth, as the Lord hath enabled me to be, God will seal it in like manner with the baptism of the Holy Ghost’.¹²⁹ Irving believed that speaking in tongues was the sign and manifestation to unbelievers, while it was a means of grace to the believers.¹³⁰ Concerning the public exercise of the tongues, Irving had thought that it ought to be used ‘privately and frequently for [the speaker’s] own spiritual edification, but not in the meetings of the church, unless there be interpretation at hand’.¹³¹ However, Irving’s later clumsy control in relation to tongues drove his church into chaos and led to his eviction from the church.

¹²⁷ Edward Miller, *The History and Doctrines of Irvingism or of the so-called Catholic and Apostolic Church*, 2 Vols. (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1878), I, 66.

¹²⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 186.

¹²⁹ Irving’s letter to Dr. Martin, dated 26 Oct 1831, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 193.

¹³⁰ E. Irving, *On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost Commonly Called Supernatural*, in *CW*, V, 559.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

On 16 October 1831 Miss Hall spoke in tongues during a public service in the National Scotch Church and then rushed into the vestry.¹³² This event attracted more attendants at the service and set Irving to think more seriously about permitting the tongues in the service. The evening service of the day attracted about three thousand people in the church ‘by irreverent curiosity’, and individuals broke out in tongues twice during the service. James Nisbet, an elder who loved Irving as a brother, feared that Irving’s intention to allow the tongues in a church service which would be an adverse step. Most elders did not want the service interrupted by such incidents, but Irving believed that these phenomena were manifestations of God and that it was his duty to allow them in worship. Irving’s belief in the gifts led to conflict with the trustees who were responsible for orderly worship in the church. There were several meetings including painful clashes between the minister and the trustees who had hitherto supported their minister. Irving claimed that the manifestations were divine and rested on the Word of God, while the members of the trustee did not believe the so-called ‘gifts’ and wanted to end them.¹³³ Among the elders, Mr. Mackenzie alone followed Irving’s opinion.

Mary Campbell, who had been one of the initiators of these phenomena in the West of Scotland, moved to London after she married William R. Caird, a law clerk in a writer’s office in Edinburgh, in 1831. Mary Campbell, now Mrs Caird, stayed with Lady Olivia Sparrow of Irving’s congregation, visited houses and churches and testified to what she had experienced and about her convictions. Several times Irving mentioned that ‘Mrs Caird is with me’, which suggests that she frequented Irving’s congregation. The Macdonalds, however, did not go down to Irving’s church even though the congregation invited them,

¹³² There is confusion about the date, among on 16 Oct, 30 Oct, 6 Nov, 13 Nov; but as Oliphant says, the precise date is unimportant. Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 203.

¹³³ J. Hair, *Regent Square*, 113.

‘simply because they could not see that the Lord was calling them there’.¹³⁴ Instead, they showed their Christian devotion by visiting nearby cholera patients.¹³⁵

Mrs Caird regarded the tongues given to her as the language of the Pelew Islands, or the Turkish and Chinese languages. If it were so, the gift of tongues would have been a useful gift from God in the mission field, but as it could not be proven that Mary Caird was speaking in any known languages, there was growing criticism. Archibald McKerrell, who supported tongues and tried to write down the utterances, suggested that the tongue speaker should speak out in a tongue and English alternately.¹³⁶ Many discerned nothing but enthusiasm and delusion among Irving’s followers.¹³⁷ After attending Irving’s morning prayer meeting for three months, George Pilkington described what he had experienced and concluded that he had ‘discovered error and discrepancy in their proceedings, which cannot exist in any work that emanates from God’.¹³⁸ The *Edinburgh Review* denounced the so-called ‘gifted person’ as exuding a false light, based on ‘their mere personal assertion that they are inspired’, and claims to ‘imaginary gifts’.¹³⁹

Irving’s closest friend Thomas Carlyle also could not agree with Irving’s view on the tongues. Carlyle confided to his mother that ‘His friends here are all much grieved. For many months he has been puddling in the midst of certain insane jargonings of hysterical women, and cracked-brained enthusiasts, who start up from time to time in public and utter confused stuff, mostly “oh’s” and “ah’s”, and absurd interjections about “the body of Jesus”;

¹³⁴ Norton, *Memories of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow*, 199.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹³⁶ Archibald McKerrell, *An Apology for the Gifts of Tongues and Interpretation, at Present Manifested in the Church of Christ* (Greenock: W. Johnston, 1831), 12f.

¹³⁷ Joseph Thompson, *The Owens College: Its Foundation and Growth; and Its Connection with the Victoria University Manchester* (Manchester: J. E. Cornish, 1886), 182.

¹³⁸ George Pilkington, *The Unknown Tongues Discovered to Be English, Spanish, and Latin; and the Rev. Edw. Irving Proved to Be Erroneous in Attributing Their Utterance to the Influence of the Holy Spirit* (London: Field & Bull, 1831), 36.

¹³⁹ ‘Pretended Miracles – Irving, Scott, and Erskine,’ *Edinburgh Review* 106 (June 1831): 261-305. In this thesis, I do not expound details on various understandings of tongues, rather on the relationship between Irving’s Christology and charismatic phenomena. For various views on tongues, see Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle*.

they also pretended to work miracles, and have raised more than one weak bedrid woman, and cured people of ‘nerves’, or as they themselves say, “cast devils out of them”’.¹⁴⁰

One night Carlyle, together with his wife Jane, visited Irving’s home where they heard a woman speaking in tongues. According to Carlyle, ‘there burst forth a shrieky hysterical “Lall-lall-lall!” (little or nothing else but *l*’s and *a*’s continued for several minutes)’. Irving explained that it was tongues, but Carlyle could only think ‘Why wasn’t there a bucket of cold water to fling on that lall-lalling hysterical mad-woman?’¹⁴¹ After hearing these ‘disgusted sounds’, Mrs Carlyle almost fainted.¹⁴²

As Irving’s closest friends, they might have tried to understand what Irving believed in so strongly. But they would not, and this kind of contemptuous reaction was common among his contemporaries except for ‘the gifted persons’ and ‘blinded followers’ within Irving’s circle. ‘Had Irving married me,’ Jane Welsh Carlyle later observed, ‘there would have been no tongues’.¹⁴³ Robert Story, Irving’s friend from university days, expressed his apprehension of Irving’s indulgence of spiritual gifts that such ‘a lofty mind [Irving] wasting itself on the vague uncertainties ... hurried on and worn out in the feverish excitement of a restless and bewildering supernaturalism’.¹⁴⁴

Elizabeth Hall’s Healing Case

In August 1830 Elizabeth Hall, who was between ten and eleven years of age, suffered pain and difficulty in walking. She became unable to move on 28 December. The family doctor found that her disorder was in the spine, and her bone was incurvated and bowed out, so ‘She

¹⁴⁰ T. Carlyle’s letter to his mother dated 20 Oct 1831, in Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle*, 168.

¹⁴¹ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 298.

¹⁴² Mrs. A. Ireland, *Life of J. W. Carlyle* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1891), 125.

¹⁴³ James A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, A History of the First Forty Years of his Life* in two Vols. (London: Longmans, 1882), I, 162; Hanson, *Necessary Evil*, 165.

¹⁴⁴ R. H. Story, *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story*, 227.

was carried from room to room by two persons'.¹⁴⁵ The disorder progressed rapidly and became desperate.

In July 1831 a woman in Irving's congregation, acquainted with the family, visited her. This woman spoke to the girl 'of the power and will of Jesus to heal the souls and bodies of all who come to him, as he did when on earth, and as he empowered his believing people to do his name when he ascended to the Father, and had received all power both in heaven and on earth'.¹⁴⁶ After the visit, Elizabeth spoke warmly of the lady's visit and hoped she might come again. Her physical condition began to improve. Her aunt who had lately become an attendant at Regent Square asked Irving to call on her niece which he did on 11 July 1831. Irving spoke to her of Jesus Christ as a healer, and offered up a short prayer for her.¹⁴⁷ After Irving's visit she told her mother that she felt assured of recovery. Four days after Irving's visit, she felt 'her heart lifted up into communion with God' and her faith much strengthened while reading Hebrews xi and Mark xi. 23.¹⁴⁸ She was also able to stand upright. 'At first, her diseased leg trembled violently, yet without pain; but it soon became steady, and she stepped first on a chair, and then on the ground; first moving with a heavy, laboured step, but it became gradually lighter and more free, and she walked across the room'.¹⁴⁹

Her physical condition soon regressed and Irving visited again to pray with her. Shortly after, she experienced a sudden and full recovery.¹⁵⁰ The girl could walk around the house and garden unaided. The surgeon, who attended Elizabeth, had judged her case to be 'past medical aid' and reported of the recovery that 'certainly human skill had not done it'.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ E. Irving, 'Cure of Elizabeth Hall,' in *The Testimony of Facts concerning the Continuation of Miracles in the Church* (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1832), 50.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 52.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 54. According to D. Bebbington, there were forty-six spiritual cures among the Irving's circle in one year alone, in David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 91. For more cases of healing, see *The Testimony of Facts concerning the Continuation of Miracles in the Church*

The prayer of faith, according to John Stoughton, was ‘the only apparent means which led to’ her healing.¹⁵²

E.2. Being Evicted from Regent Square

Irving based his decision to permit the speaking of tongues and prophecy in public worship on I Corinthians 14: 37, 23 and 29-31: ‘in the name and by the commandment of the Lord Jesus, that the prophets shall speak when the whole Church is gathered together into one place, “two or three”, and hath permitted that all the prophets may prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted’.¹⁵³ In the First Book of Discipline, Irving also argued, the Church of Scotland had appointed a weekly exercise for prophesying or interpretation of the Scriptures. According to the command of Jesus, Irving claimed, it was a duty to do so, ‘for beyond question it belongeth to every man to try the spirits; it belongeth not to the pastor alone’.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, he permitted ‘the Spirit to speak at all times, waiting always at the end of the exposition and the sermon’.¹⁵⁵ However, it should be noted that the Westminster Confession of Faith states that religious worship should be conducted ‘in a known tongue’ (article 21, sec.3), and such interruptions of worship were strictly forbidden by the Westminster Directory for Public Worship.¹⁵⁶

‘Irving’s sense of loyalty to God required him to stand fast’.¹⁵⁷ In obedience to what he viewed as the will of God, Irving would persevere to the point of martyrdom: ‘He could bear to be shut out from his pulpit, excommunicated by his Church, forsaken of his friends.

(Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1832); ‘Particulars of a Few Recent Cases of Healing’ in *MW*, IV; ‘Miraculous Cures’, ‘Visions – Miraculous Cures – Cholera’ in *MW*, V.

¹⁵² John Stoughton, *Religion in England from 1800 to 1850: a History with a Postscript on Subsequent Events* in 2 Vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884), I, 382.

¹⁵³ Irving’s letter dated 22 Nov 1831, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 218.

¹⁵⁴ *The Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A. Before the London Presbytery* (London: W. Harding, 1832), 31.

¹⁵⁵ Irving’s letter dated 21 Nov 1831, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 216.

¹⁵⁶ *The Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A. Before the London Presbytery*, 75.

¹⁵⁷ J. Hair, *Regent Square*, 113.

What he could not do, was to weigh his own comfort, happiness, or life, for a moment, against what he believed to be the will and ordinance of God'.¹⁵⁸ But the congregation largely perceived Irving to be 'surely be out of his mind or something worse' and felt the need to 'take some measure to put a stop to such nonsense'.¹⁵⁹ Confronted with Irving's uncompromising commitment to allowing the tongues in church, the trustees finally commenced legal action.

On 22 March 1832 the London Presbytery received the complaint of the trustees, and the trial commenced on 26 April 1832. The main charges against Irving were that he had permitted the interruption of public services at the National Scotch Church by 'persons not being either ministers or licentiates of the Church of Scotland' on Sabbath and other days, by appointing times for 'gifted persons' to exercise their supposed gifts.¹⁶⁰ In the first day of trial, Irving grew angry over the manner of the Presbytery and left the court leaving a note.¹⁶¹ For Irving, the more painful aspect of this trial was Robert Baxter's testimony that the gifts were a delusion. As one of the alleged gifted persons in Irving's congregation, Baxter had spoken in tongues and conducted exorcisms. But on the morning of Irving's trial, Baxter said that it all was merely a grand delusion.

During the trial, Irving exclaimed: 'I deny it to be the doctrine of the Church of Scotland, that any minister is required to go up to the General Assembly for authority to do that which he discerned to be his duty. It is the command of your ordination vows that you serve Jesus. You are ministers of Jesus, and not the ministers of any assembly; you are the ministers of the word of God, and not the ministers of the standards of any church'.¹⁶² The trial was directed to church order and discipline, not theology, but Irving explained the

¹⁵⁸ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 230.

¹⁵⁹ 'James Chalmers to T. Chalmers, London, 13 January 1832', New College Library, TCP, CHA 4.175.69.

¹⁶⁰ *The Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A. Before the London Presbytery*, 3.

¹⁶¹ Edward Irving, Protest to the Presbytery of London, 26 Apr 1832, NLS.MS.1030.55.

¹⁶² *The Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A. Before the London Presbytery*, 35.

events in theological terms.¹⁶³ Regarding the complaints of the trustees, Irving insisted that ‘the tendency and effect of the complaint is to destroy the name of Jesus as baptizer with the Holy Ghost’.¹⁶⁴ To renounce the gifts of tongues was, for Irving, to deny both the presence of God and his revelation. As he believed the manifestations in the church were divine, he was not satisfied with the authority of the Presbytery to judge them: ‘If these be the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, what court under heaven would dare to interpose and say they shall not be suffered to proceed?’ ‘The decision’, Irving claimed, ‘must entirely depend on this: whether it be of the Holy Ghost, or whether it be not of the Holy Ghost. For if it be, who dare gainsay it?’¹⁶⁵

On 2 May 1832 the Presbytery decided that the outbursts were contrary to Presbyterian doctrine and practice and a ‘vain, monstrous, abominable delusion’; and it further determined that ‘Rev. Edward Irving has rendered himself unfit to remain the minister of the National Scotch Church aforesaid, and ought to be removed therefrom, in pursuance of the conditions of the trust-deed of the said church’.¹⁶⁶ The news of Irving’s expulsion from his church swept through Britain. *The Times* reported the trustees’ victory against Irving that ‘the blasphemous absurdities’ be brought to an effectual conclusion, as its being ‘impossible any longer to tolerate the nuisance’.¹⁶⁷

Irving assumed that he would be allowed to conduct Communion on the following Sunday as his act of service to the church. However, the trustees did not give him that opportunity any more. The next morning when Irving and the daily congregation arrived in Regent Square for the usual early morning prayer meeting, they found the doors of the church were locked.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶⁵ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 284.

¹⁶⁶ *The Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A. Before the London Presbytery*, 88.

¹⁶⁷ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 298.

F. Conclusion

Irving's theology emphasised an intimate relationship between humanity and the Creator within God's plans and purposes. For Irving, the doctrine of Christ's human nature ultimately led him to the belief that the purpose of God's creating man lay in the manifestation of His glory to the creatures; 'God dwelling in that form of creature which is made to be his image, is revelation or manifestation of himself'.¹⁶⁸ Man, as a being made in the *Imago Dei*, shares a body with Christ, which enables believers to have union with Him. In Irving's thinking, man was Christ's brother, who shared the *homoousion* body and powers by the work of the Holy Ghost. This was demonstrated not only in God's appearance in humanity – the *Imago Dei* – but also through the miraculous signs by which God manifested His Being. Humanity's regeneration and renewal in the image of God could be accomplished through the sacraments.¹⁶⁹

The phenomena which commenced in the West of Scotland were both disturbing and joyful for Irving. They confirmed his belief that miraculous gifts should be continuously manifested through Christian history, as a result of the work of the Holy Ghost as described in the Scriptures. The idea of Christ's genuine humanity called forth, Irving believed, the restoration of the apostolic supernatural gifts. Similarly, Irving believed that the denial of the miraculous gifts meant the denial of Christ's genuine humanity. George Macdonald's confession of 'God in our nature' and His 'unity with our flesh' and Mary Campbell's own understanding of supernatural gifts based on Christ's genuine humanity served to enhance Irving's faith in God's miraculous manifestation. Irving's denunciation of the churches for their unbelief or apostasy led to confrontation with his Calvinist opponents who held firmly to the standards of the Westminster Confession.

¹⁶⁸ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in CW, V, 238; *The Day of Pentecost or the Baptism with the Holy Ghost*, 41.

¹⁶⁹ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in CW, II, 545.

Apart from his opponents' rejection of the manifestations, Irving struggled within himself over his understanding of the restoration of supernatural endowments before the Second Advent. His conviction that all speakers in tongues were 'holy and gifted people' posed a theological problem, which was not matched by his conception of man as 'a pathway by which He came to this world' and his belief that the organs of the 'gifted persons' were used by the Spirit of God as 'Christ's hand'.¹⁷⁰ Although Irving believed human beings to be God's temple in terms of a dwelling place of the Spirit, many of the supposed 'gifted' persons in his London congregation were less than elevated, and their misconduct undermined Irving's status in the National Scotch Church.

From the point of view of the trustees of the church, the eviction of Irving as their minister was a victory for Presbyterianism. The Presbyterianism which had moulded Irving from his youth now rejected him. The deposing of a number of ministers by the General Assembly of 1831, kept the Established Church safely within the tradition of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* urged Church courts to take up Irving's case based on the National Kirk's 'own supreme jurisdiction over all, in every place, who have at any time signed the standards of the Church of Scotland'.¹⁷¹ Irving's emphasis on miraculous manifestations through the power of the Holy Spirit could have been his reaction to the social conditions of the early nineteenth century, when 'more and more people were subjected to the inhuman disciplines of factory, clock and technology and knowledge was increasingly institutionalized and bureaucratized, taken out of ordinary people's hands'.¹⁷²

In face of the growing opposition to the manifestations, Irving penned his own account about the phenomena, at the request of James Fraser, the editor of *Fraser's Magazine*,

¹⁷⁰ Irving, *The Church, with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power*, in CW, V, 480.

¹⁷¹ 'Mr. Irving and the General Assembly', in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* Vol. 30. (Sep. 1831), 605.

¹⁷² Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Millenarianism* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 10.

entitled 'Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts'. He hoped readers could be brought to understand the meaning of the spiritual gifts and by doing so could give reasonable judgement against the 'torrent of blasphemy' concerning the work of the Spirit.¹⁷³ During 1831, while experiencing the alleged spiritual manifestations around him, Irving worked to develop his theological understanding of the subject and published it under the title *The Day of Pentecost, or The Baptism with the Holy Ghost*, which was one of the finest works on the subject. In this work, Irving speculated on both the doctrines of incarnation and the spiritual gifts, while his attention moved from Christological subject of holiness in Christ's sinful flesh to the works of the Spirit in the context of the Church. The latter was theologically derived from the former.

Irving placed an emphasis on the work of the Holy Ghost in Christ as the theological base of the ministerial work of Christ on earth.¹⁷⁴ Christ overcame all the temptations in the flesh with the Spirit, and the same Spirit would now enable His brothers to have the same victory over worldly temptations. By the baptism of John, Christ was empowered to overcome temptations: 'John's baptism went the length of repentance, change of heart, or regeneration; and remission of sins, or cleansing by the blood of Christ from our sins, through vital union with him by faith'.¹⁷⁵ In other words, Irving believed that John's baptism had been enough to constitute mankind's conversion to Christ. Pentecost, the baptism of the Holy Ghost for believers, was another promise of the Father in terms of our receiving the gifts of the Holy Ghost; 'The baptism with the Holy Ghost is the way of God's dwelling and working in us'.¹⁷⁶

When Christ was baptized in Jordan, He received the promise of the Father, and then He preached the Gospel. It was by the baptism of the Holy Ghost that Christ did the Father's

¹⁷³ Irving, 'Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts', 754.

¹⁷⁴ Irving, *The Day of Pentecost or the Baptism with the Holy Ghost*, 18.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 27.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

will.¹⁷⁷ It was Irving's message that as Christ did his works in the flesh, so common believers could do the same, even more than what Jesus did, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This paralleled Irving's expectation of the coming glory; in both cases, Christ's genuine humanity provided a theological core: 'The superhuman powers presently possessed by the church are but glimpses of the glory which is yet to be revealed'.¹⁷⁸ Christ's genuine humanity worked essentially in performing God's works through His sinful brothers.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 16, 32.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 76.

Chapter V. Irving's Hope for the Coming Kingdom

Introduction

From the 1820s onwards a group of religious thinkers, including Irving, embraced the idea that conditions in the world were growing steadily worse and that Christ's return was imminent. Irving believed that only Christ's personal return would transform the present depraved condition of the world. His high expectations of the coming kingdom had been shaped not only by his exploration of the Scriptures but also by his social contacts. Irving's radical eschatology appealed to the public, but also encountered severe criticism.

Irving's prophetic beliefs can be understood in the context of the nineteenth-century Evangelical movement. It is neither possible nor necessary to discuss all aspects of the contemporary prophetic movement in this chapter; rather, focus will be given to the development of Irving's eschatology, including the theological connection between his Christology and his Millennialism. For this, I will explore how his ideas were formed and developed in connection with his Christological understanding. In addition to this, a brief description of the final stage of his life will be given, which may be understood within an eschatological perspective.

A. The Revival of Millennialism

A.1. Millennial Appeal

Eschatology, meaning the 'last days', gives hope to Christians and appeals especially to oppressed or persecuted groups. The heavenly kingdom has been regarded as their spiritual destination; it is a Promised Land with eternal blessings, offering escape from their

inescapable world. Christ's second coming was thus a sign of the final achievement of their vision of the heavenly kingdom. The term millennialism commonly conjures up images either of unsettled communities dissatisfied with their present conditions or of 'victim-groups', longing for a new era by social change or revolution.¹ However, the first half of the nineteenth century saw the growth of millenarianism within traditional mainstream churches, and associated with a developed theology.² It was a movement that found supporters within the Established Churches, and attracted many well-educated and respected persons, including some members of parliament.³

It is difficult to isolate any primary cause of the pre-millenarian movement; rather it emerged from an interrelated set of social, political, ecclesiastical and theological elements.⁴ The tumultuous religious and political atmosphere of the 1820s and 1830s provoked a considerable crisis of identity within British Evangelicalism, which stimulated a dramatic increase in prophetic study.⁵

According to Le Roy Edwin Froom, a Seventh-day Adventist historian, more than a hundred important works on the pre-millennial advent and the prophecies appeared in the first decades of the nineteenth century.⁶ Several organizations and at least ten periodicals were launched in support of prophetic studies, based in England, Scotland, Ireland, and France.⁷

¹ David M. Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Eschatology', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980), 181; William Hosking Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists: the Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1978), 17; Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Millenarianism* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 3f.

² Stewart J. Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics and Society in the United Kingdom, 1815-1914* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2008), 70; Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Eschatology', 182.

³ Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 154.

⁴ Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Eschatology', 182.

⁵ Ralph Brown, 'Victorian Anglican Evangelicalism: The Radical Legacy of Edward Irving', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58 (2007), 676.

⁶ Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: the Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* in 4 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946-1954), vol. 3, 266.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 268.

A.2. The French Revolution and Romanticism

The French Revolution

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars had a significant social and religious impact on Britain as well as most of the Continent, and inspired prophetic attention. By its following boom of millennial study, the French Revolution has been regarded as ‘directly responsible’ for the revival of prophetic concern.⁸ It seemed to initiate a series of transcendent events beyond mundane human history.⁹

Elhanan Winchester, an American Universalist preacher, interpreted the French Revolution as the fulfilment of the catastrophic three woes, described in Rev. 11, by which ‘the third woe’ would come quickly as ‘the second woe’ had passed.¹⁰ The French Revolution was a ‘Signs of Times’ for Winchester, and ‘all the seven vials of the wrath of God’ would be poured out until the Second Advent occurred. This would in turn lead to ‘a new man on a new earth’ in a restored Paradise.¹¹

Recalling the establishment of Roman Catholicism in the pre-revolutionary French monarchical state, Irving portrayed the ‘earthquake of the French revolution’ as a falling of ‘a tenth part of the papal city’.¹² Later, following the creation of the Napoleonic Empire, Irving insisted that to resist Napoleon and his regime was Britain’s divinely ordained destiny.¹³ The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, Irving predicted, had fatally

⁸ Ernest Robert Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 5.

⁹ Stewart J. Brown, *The National Churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1801-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 251f.

¹⁰ Elhanan Winchester, *The Three Woe Trumpets* (London: Samuel Reece, 1793), 37f.

¹¹ M. H. Abrams. ‘English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age’, in *Romanticism Reconsidered: Selected Papers from the English Institute* (ed. Northrop Frye; New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 46.

¹² Irving, ‘The Plan of the Apocalypse’, in *Thirty Sermons*, 342.

¹³ Fulford, *Romanticism and Millenarianism*, 8.

wounded the French Roman Catholic hierarchy, and would ultimately lead to the fall of the Papacy.¹⁴

Romanticism

Early nineteenth-century pre-millennialism has frequently been described from the perspective of Romanticism. Pre-millennialism can certainly be understood in the context of Romanticism – ‘the greatest single shift in the consciousness of the West’.¹⁵ In the turbulent age defined by the French Revolution and its desire for new society, Romanticism, with its emphasis on the sublime, helped to give expression to eschatological visions.

One characteristic of Romanticism was conveyed in the words of Emile Faguet, the nineteenth-century French literary critic, who wrote that ‘the basis of Romanticism is a horror of reality and a desire to escape from it ... [a desire] to liberate oneself from the real by means of the imagination, to liberate oneself again through solitude and by retiring into the sanctuary of personal feeling’.¹⁶ This spirit found expression in imaginative literature as well as religious writings.¹⁷ Romanticism has been described as a ‘rebellious child’.¹⁸ Romanticism could lead some to pursue the millennial Kingdom, and to believe the present social dislocations and misery would come to an end through divine intervention.

David Bebbington interprets the millennialism of the 1820s as a ‘part of the Romantic inflow into Evangelicalism. Christ the coming king could readily be pictured by poetic imaginations fascinated by the strange, the awesome and the supernatural’.¹⁹ It was ‘a symptom of the spread of Romantic cultural influences into Evangelical religion’.²⁰ Patricia

¹⁴ Irving, ‘The Plan of the Apocalypse,’ 343-5.

¹⁵ Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, 1.

¹⁶ Bernard Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3.

¹⁷ See, Tim Fulford, ‘Millenarianism and the Study of Romanticism’, in *Romanticism and Millenarianism*, ed. Tim Fulford (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

¹⁸ Alfred De Paz, ‘Innovation and Modernity’, in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. 5, Romanticism* (ed. Marshall Brown, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30.

¹⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 84.

²⁰ David Bebbington, ‘The Advent Hope in British Evangelicalism since 1800’, *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 9 (1988), 104.

Meldrum also asserts that 'Premillennialism was, typically, a product of a Romantic and uncertain age'.²¹

The Romantic Movement, with its emphasis on feeling as opposed to reason, on the power and versatility of nature as opposed to mechanistic order, and on mystery and the limits of human powers, formed a favourable ground for the growth of Evangelicalism.²² The Romantic sensibilities of the age were open to the notion of a divinely-inspired supernatural transformation of the natural world.²³ Irving's personality reflects the diverse cultural influences of the later Enlightenment alongside the new influences of Romantic art and literature. He became a Romantic figure, in Isaiah Berlin's definition, 'whose chief burden is to destroy ordinary tolerant life, to destroy philistinism ... to raise everybody to some passionate level of self-expressive experiences'.²⁴ Adopting 'Evangelicalism into the Romantic idiom', Irving appealed to the heart as well as the mind.²⁵ He certainly held 'a new appreciation of the dramatic, the extraordinary and the otherworldly element in religion'.²⁶ Amid rapid social change and unrest, Irving envisaged and anticipated an ideal world. His belief that the church of his day was locked in impotence and spiritual lethargy led him to long for a divine interruption of mundane realities. Eschatology, as 'the most significant early adoption of an element of Romantic thinking by Evangelicals' became a significant theme for Irving.²⁷ In Irving's thought, the Second Advent was no mere doctrine, but an actual dynamic reality close at hand, promising God's manifestation in power and glory.

²¹ Patricia Meldrum, *Conscience and Compromise: Forgotten Evangelicals of Nineteenth-century Scotland* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006), 143.

²² Brown, *Chalmers*, 45, 211; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 81; Michael W. Honeycutt, 'William Cunningham: His Life, Thought, and Controversies' (PhD Thesis. University of Edinburgh, 2002), 5.

²³ Ralph Brown, 'Victorian Anglican Evangelicalism', 681.

²⁴ Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, 146.

²⁵ Tim Grass, 'Edward Irving: Eschatology, Ecclesiology and Spiritual Gifts.' in *Prisoners of Hope?: Aspects of Evangelical Millennialism in Britain and Ireland, 1800-1880*, ed. Crawford Gribben and Timothy C. F. Stunt (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), 97.

²⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 81.

²⁷ Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism', 244.

Post-versus-Pre Millennialism

Before the French Revolution, the majority of millenarians were post-millennialists, who believed that the Second Advent would come after the millennium, or the expected thousand-year reign of the saints on earth. While the pre-millennialists expected the establishment of the millennium by divine, cataclysmic action, the postmillennialists believed that the kingdom of God would come gradually as the result of the endeavours of individual Christians and the improvement of human institutions.²⁸ Encouraged by the Evangelical revival at home and by the rising tide of Protestant world missions, they believed that a vital Christianity was gradually spreading over the whole earth and would in time usher in a millennial age of spiritual blessing. The future was expected to bring peace and glory for Christianity, promoted by agencies like the London Missionary Society, with the notion of 'Christian pragmatism that saw the world as waiting to be conquered for Christ by the most efficient methods available'.²⁹

But the catastrophic events after 1789 that swept the whole of Europe, leading to the violent uprooting of many political and social institutions, convinced some thinkers that the end of the world was near.³⁰ It was not only the French Revolution but also the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) and the Bristol riots (1831) that were perceived as evidence of a profound instability in society. The growing involvement of the European nations in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire was viewed as a precursor of the war of Armageddon.³¹ This corrupt world, according to the pre-millenarians, could have its problems resolved only by the personal return of Christ to establish the millennial kingdom; thus Christ's return must occur prior to the commencement of the millennium. In this sense, the French Revolution was portrayed as 'the frustration of hopes built on faith in man's abilities but the fulfilment

²⁸ J.F.C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979), 4.

²⁹ Bebbington, 'The Advent Hope in British Evangelicalism since 1800', 104; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 62; Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism', 239.

³⁰ Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 5.

³¹ William Cuninghame, *A Summary View of the Scriptural Argument for the Second and Glorious Advent of Messiah before the Millennium* (Glasgow: Maurice Ogle, 1828), 19.

of hopes built on God's promises'.³² In the eyes of those who believed in a post-millennial advent, this expectation of Christ's personal return seemed heterodox. Since they believed the Second Advent would occur only after the millennium, Christ's return must be more than a thousand years away.³³ The tension between these two interpretations was real: pre-millennialists explored world events in light of Christ's imminent coming, seeing their opponents, at best, as foolishly naïve, while post-millennialists viewed the pre-millennialists as 'heretics' or enthusiasts. The idea that Christ would come again in person was a divisive 'innovation in the Evangelical world of the 1820s'.³⁴

The spread of this negative eschatology after the French Revolution led some Evangelicals to retreat from broad cultural engagement, and socio-political reform efforts came to be regarded as useless: 'There were dark, demonic powers at work in history and if Christ's ultimate triumph were to be assured, then it had better be relocated *outside* this world'.³⁵ Prophetic speculations in early nineteenth-century Britain led to some major scholarly works, including George Stanley Faber's *Dissertation on the Prophecies* (1804), William Cunningham of Lainshaw's *Dissertation on the Seals and Trumpets* (1813), James Hatley Frere's *Combined View of the Christian Prophecies* (1815), and Lewis Way's *The Latter Rain: With Observations on the Importance of General Prayer for the Special Outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (1821).

Anti-Catholicism and the Conversion of the Jews

As Ernest Sandeen observed, 'the pairing of anti-Catholicism and millenarianism was more than casual'.³⁶ For pre-millenarians, the revival of Roman Catholicism was regarded as 'confirmation of the increasing corruption of the world'.³⁷

³² Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 84.

³⁵ David W Smith, *Transforming the World?: The Social Impact of British Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 28.

³⁶ Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 17.

From the later eighteenth century, there had been improvements in the rights and liberties of Roman Catholics in Britain and Ireland. The anti-Catholic penal laws, including the prohibitions on Catholics owning land in Ireland, on educating their children in Catholic schools, on voting in parliamentary elections in Ireland and on practising the law, were largely repealed from the later 1770s. Many Whigs and liberal Tories had argued that the Act of Union of 1800 (which provided for a legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland) should be followed by full Catholic emancipation, including the right of Catholics to sit in Parliament. However, for supporters of a patriotic Protestantism, Catholic emancipation would be a betrayal of the Protestant national spirit. Seeing Popery as ‘Babylon’, pre-millennialists vigorously opposed Catholic Emancipation, and there was an increase in the number of anti-Catholic pre-millenarian MPs from 1825.³⁸

The early nineteenth-century pre-millennialists also took a keen interest in the conversion of the Jews.³⁹ Lewis Way, a wealthy London lawyer, noted the biblical connection between Christ’s second coming and the conversion of the Jews, and he requested special prayer for Jews based on their ‘ulterior spiritual application to the Gentiles’.⁴⁰ He published a series of articles in *The Jewish Expositor*, journal of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, under the pseudonym Basilicus, in which he argued that Christ would soon return before the beginning of the millennium.⁴¹

The pre-millennialists in the Established Church of England felt they had a sacred duty to call the Church to a sense of her destiny, alert the nation to the fate awaiting it, and

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 211.

³⁹ We note the fact that the restoration of the Diaspora Jews (national Israel at present) was not accomplished until the UN Partition Plan of 1947 and the Declaration of Independence of 1948. In the 1820s, in this context, discussion of the restoration of Jews might sound more prophetic.

⁴⁰ Lewis Way, *The Latter Rain: With Observations on the Importance of General Prayer for the Special Outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (London: John Hatchard and Son, 1821), v, 42, 71.

⁴¹ Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 12. Later, a writer of the *Morning Watch* expressed that the connection between the return of the Jews and the Second Advent has biblical support in several verses. See, Anonym, ‘On the Return of the Jews’, in *MW*, VI (1832), 352.

prepare believers for the imminent Apocalypse.⁴² Their pessimistic view about the future led them to lose all trust in institutional means to improve the present ‘evil world’, to accuse the existing churches, which did not agree with their views, of being ‘Babylon’, and to encourage common believers to expect the *Parousia*. For them, the only solution for this ‘corrupted city of God’ was Christ’s Second Coming.

B. Irving’s Attention on the Millennial Hope

B.1. Irving’s Early Attention

Irving has been considered the leading figure in forming premillennial prophecy into a popular movement, and thus changing the shape of evangelical Protestantism in nineteenth-century Britain.⁴³ From his first publication in 1823, *For the Oracles of God*, Irving apparently expressed his expectation of the coming kingdom. According to the image of the heavenly kingdom described in Psalm twenty-three and the seventh chapter of Revelation, ‘the Lamb ... shall lead them by rivers of living waters, and wipe away all tears from their eyes’.⁴⁴ The City of God would be established by Christ, according to Irving, since ‘He is the way by which it is to be reached’.⁴⁵ In the latter part of the book, *For Judgement to Come*, published in 1823, Irving portrayed humanity’s anticipation of regaining the paradise that had been lost. With grandiloquent language, Irving described the City of God; the ‘harp

⁴² Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 157.

⁴³ Iain Hamish Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: Banner and Truth Trust, 1975), 188; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 78; Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 14; Sheridan Gilley, ‘Edward Irving: prophet of the millennium,’ in *Revival and religion since 1700* (ed. J. Garnett and C. Matthew; London: Hambledon, 1993), 106f.

⁴⁴ Irving, *For the Oracles of God*, 91. Irving’s biblical quotations in this text were Ps. 23, Isa. 25:8, Rev. 7:17, 21:4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

in heaven' would sound in believers' hearts 'full of glad and harmonious emotions', and God's final judgement would be with rejoicing mercy.⁴⁶

His study of the book of the Revelation convinced Irving that it was 'the most wonderful, spiritual, and self-demonstrating book of the whole canon' revealing 'the mystery of Divine Providence to the church and to the world'.⁴⁷ The Messiah's coming, for Irving, would give comfort to all generations who had faith in it.⁴⁸ In the book of the Revelation, Irving found 'the consolation of his suffering members to be always drawn from the vengeance which he will take upon their persecutors, and the redemption which he will bring to them at his coming'.⁴⁹ For Irving, the judgment over the Gentile nations was impending; hence 'the truly blessed is he that watcheth ... for at a time when not expected he will come'.⁵⁰ In the Psalms, Irving also found predictions of God's everlasting kingdom, into which 'an abundant entrance shall be ministered'. When common believers' 'earthly house of this tabernacle being dissolved', he maintained, 'they shall enter into the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens'.⁵¹

There were numerous examples of Irving's dream of the heavenly kingdom in his early writings, which support the view that he already had millennialist leanings before his association with the prophetic movement. Irving's purpose in his apocalyptic discourses, which had been exercised from his early years in London, was 'to deliver the church from ... error, and to make her prepare for the coming of the Lord, and watch against the evil spirits of Antichrist'.⁵²

⁴⁶ Ibid., 414.

⁴⁷ Irving, 'The Plan of the Apocalypse', in *Thirty Sermons*, 344.

⁴⁸ Irving, 'The Second Coming of Christ', in *Thirty Sermons*, 243.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 252.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 254.

⁵¹ Irving, *Introductory Essay to Bishop Horne's Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 22.

⁵² Irving, 'The Plan of the Apocalypse', in *Thirty Sermons*, 347.

B.2. Prophetic Students

When Irving had published his first book, he had sent a copy to Coleridge, who inscribed a note on the blank leaf: 'Let this young man know that the world is not to be converted, but judged'.⁵³ According to Irving's wife, this note was 'a mighty word to her husband', which contributed to the gradual change in Irving's view of the Christian dispensation, as involving not the wholesale conversion of the masses but rather a select gathering of the elect.⁵⁴ That the world was to be converted by Gospel, for Irving, came to be regarded as a grand error, as the world had clearly demonstrated its iniquity by its rejection of the Gospel.⁵⁵ Irving acknowledged his indebtedness to Coleridge 'from whom he received the first idea of the prophetic growth of God's word'.⁵⁶ None the less, although the development of Irving's pre-millennialist views had been influenced by Coleridge, the latter would strongly criticise Irving's millennial theory as 'a Delusion ... the great source of Error in all',⁵⁷ when Irving gave it expression; and he would claim that Irving's apocalyptic interpretation mainly relied on Daniel and Revelation, which for Coleridge was not a sufficient grounding.⁵⁸

James Hatley Frere, 'one of the most sedulous of those prophetic students', had expounded a new scheme of chiliastic interpretation, to which Irving became an 'ardent hearer'; 'Frere's greatest acquisition', according to one historian, 'was the winning of Edward Irving'.⁵⁹ Irving explored Daniel and the Apocalypse, following Frere's plan.⁶⁰ Irving's semi-public discussions with Frere, held every Wednesday afternoon during 1825,

⁵³ W. Andrews, *Edward Irving: A Review*, 60.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ E. Irving, 'Signs of the Times, and the Characteristics of the Church', *MW*, I (1829), 657.

⁵⁶ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 73.

⁵⁷ Samuel T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* in 6 Vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971), vol. VI, 558 (8 March 1826).

⁵⁸ Coleridge, *Table Talk*, II (Appendix N), 400; *Marginalia*, III, 417, 449; *On the Constitution of Church and State*, 140.

⁵⁹ Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 3, 275.

⁶⁰ Hatley Frere, *A Combined View*, 3.

helped to provide a chiliastic colour to his anniversary sermon before the Continental Society.⁶¹ This sermon, requested by Henry Drummond, was published in enlarged form under the title *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God* (1826), and dedicated to Frere.

In this work, Irving unfolded his expectations of the coming kingdom and described a 'spiritual warfare' between the devout who were 'waiting for the kingdom of Christ' and 'Papal Superstition, and Protestant Infidelity'.⁶² Being convinced that the long period of papal captivity and 'infidel supremacy' was fast hastening to an end, Irving felt the Lord's second coming was at hand.⁶³

By using a classical prophetic calculation (by which a day in Daniel and Apocalypse is calculated to be a year), Irving portrayed the French Revolution as one of the prophetic accomplishments. 'The captivity of the Church under the Papal yoke', he maintained, commenced in 533 (the date of the Edict of Justinian); 1260 years after the promulgation of the Edict of Justinian (1260 days of Daniel and Apocalypse) would be 1793, when 'the French revolution took democratic form in the beheading of the king, and sundry other acts referred to in prophecy'.⁶⁴ In this chronology, Irving's adopted Frere's approach, as described in *A Combined View*, dividing the era of the Church's infidelity into three periods.⁶⁵ Like Frere, Irving was not sure of the literal achievement of the Second Advent; he acknowledged his insufficient study of the subject, which might lead to misinterpretation by 'interpreting too literally'.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 16.

⁶² Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity*, vii, 19.

⁶³ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 96f, 420.

⁶⁵ In addition to *A Combined View*, see also, James Hatley Frere, *Eight Letters on the Prophecies, relating to the Last Times* (London: Hatchard and Son, 1831), 15f.

⁶⁶ Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity*, 377.

B.3. Lacunza's Work

Irving's views concerning Christ's personal return were, in Tim Grass's description, 'crystallised'⁶⁷ through his translation and exploration of Ben-Ezra's *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, a work that had been given him by Henry Drummond.⁶⁸ This book contributed greatly to Irving's eschatological views, and his understanding of the Second Advent as being of Christ's spiritual coming was transformed into a belief in Christ's personal coming. When Irving received the copy of Ben-Ezra's work, he was so excited to find a 'masterpiece of reasoning' that he studied Spanish in order to translate the work. 'Ben Ezra' was actually a Chilean Jesuit, Manuel De Lacunza (1731-1801), who had speculated on millenarian subjects – including Christ's premillennial advent and subsequent glorious reign on earth. Lacunza believed that there are only two comings of Christ: 'the first in the flesh in lowly form at His incarnation, and the second in glory and majesty'. Perhaps surprisingly for a Jesuit, Lacunza claimed that the apocalyptic 'Harlot' in Revelation 17 represented papal supremacy, 'the head of Christendom'.⁶⁹ Fearing that his production would be placed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (the prohibited list for Roman Catholics), Lacunza disguised his authorship of twenty years' labour under the pseudonym of Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra, a Christian Hebrew. Completed about 1791, the work had not been published until his accidental death in 1801, when he was found dead on the bank of the river near Imola, Italy, where he had resided. Even though Lacunza's work was indeed placed on the *Index*, it was circulated in manuscript copy or in printed editions in Spain, Mexico, and South America, among both Catholics and Protestants, and it had aroused interest 'from Havana to Cape Horn'.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Grass, 'Edward Irving: Eschatology, Ecclesiology and Spiritual Gifts,' 100.

⁶⁸ Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 174.

⁶⁹ E. Irving (trans), *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty in 2 Vol.* (London: L. B. Seeley, 1827), vol. 1, 240, 252; Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. III, 321f.

⁷⁰ Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. III, 303-326.

The edition Irving received was the 1812 Cadiz print, checked against the 1826 Ackermann edition, and ‘the aura of mysterious and providential intervention surrounding the book’ immediately captured Irving’s speculative attention.⁷¹ After his initial reading of a very small portion of the text, Irving described it as ‘the chief work of a master’s hand’.⁷² After a quick acquisition of the Spanish language in about four months of study, Irving spent the summer of 1826 in translating it. He published his English version in the following January, together with his ‘Preliminary Discourse’, and he sent a copy to Chalmers, hoping that the latter would adopt pre-millennialism.⁷³ The work soon ‘became well and influentially known in Britain’.⁷⁴

If Frere had introduced Irving to prophetic study, Lacunza’s *Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty* intensified his longing for the coming kingdom and his attachment to the study of biblical prophecy. Later Irving claimed that this work revealed eschatological truth.⁷⁵

For Irving, the two images of Christ’s coming were vital to his Christological understanding. Irving’s views on original sin informed his understanding of Christ’s first coming into this world ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’, through which Christ showed ‘the Father’s immeasurable hatred against sin’.⁷⁶ Christ’s incarnation served to free his children from the power of sin, as being ‘the seed of blessings to the earth and the consummation of the blessings to the heavens’.⁷⁷ As Christ achieved a victory against Satan by being crucified, ‘He is pleased to bring many sons unto glory by the same path of humility and suffering’.⁷⁸ Through flesh, all humanity entered ‘the bondage of Satan’, but it was also

⁷¹ Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 17.

⁷² Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 19.

⁷³ Edward Irving to Thomas Chalmers, 1827, New College Library, TCP, CHA 4.77.10.

⁷⁴ Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. III, 314.

⁷⁵ *PW*, I, x.

⁷⁶ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 182.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

through the suffering of the flesh that Christ would deliver them who ‘through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage’.⁷⁹ The power of death and sin would prevail in the world, according to Irving, and ‘the whole creation groaned until ... the sin shall be cast out of the New Jerusalem and city of our God’.⁸⁰ At this second coming of Christ, Satan would be ‘chained in the bottomless pit a thousand years, and finally cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, to be tormented in it for ever and ever’.⁸¹ Irving, in his Christocentric millennial mind, had no question concerning ‘Christ’s personal reappearance in human form upon the earth’.⁸²

The time that he explored Lacunza’s work was also one of the saddest periods in Irving’s life, when he lost his first child, Edward. His mournful lamentation drove him to ‘pray to God to avenge him of death’, and resolved ‘to fight against Satan, the Prince of darkness’: ‘while I live, I will fight against death that so bereft me’.⁸³ But in the midst of sorrow, Irving found comfort in the hope of the second coming. The return of ‘His own eternal Son’ was, for Irving, a ‘Glorious exchange’ with the Lord’s taking his son ‘to His own more fatherly bosom’.⁸⁴

This was also the seed of ‘glorious exchange’ for all humanity. When Christ will come again ‘in power and majesty ... not as a servant, but as a sovereign’, ‘we shall see all the glorious attributes of God made manifest in manhood, the Son of Mary glorified into the Son of God, and clothed with the all-sustaining power of the Word of God’.⁸⁵ Then, Satan will be cast out of the earth, and the coming Christ ‘shall be caught up with believers into the air’.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 67, 180.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 181.

⁸¹ Ibid., 183.

⁸² Ibid., 45.

⁸³ Andrews, *Edward Irving: A Review*, 68f.

⁸⁴ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 72.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 59f.

In the next stage, the believer's sinful body 'shall be exchanged for the likeness of Christ's glorious body'.⁸⁶ As Christ was glorified, common believers would change their 'body of wickedness and sin and death' to a glorious body because 'sinful flesh and blood shall not inhabit' His kingdom.⁸⁷ Here, Irving's Christological concept of 'sinful flesh' works as the connecting base, uniting the Saviour and believers by exercising a common work in both of them. Through sinful flesh, which Irving believed that Christ and believers shared, common believers would follow Christ's glorification; and, through their glorified bodies, Christ and common believers would be united perfectly, in an eternal union.⁸⁸ This prospect of eternal union with Christ provided, for Irving, humanity with renewed hope.

The Relationship between the doctrine of Christ's genuine humanity (sinful flesh) and pre-millennialism

While exploring Lacunza's work, Irving developed the framework of his pre-millennial system, which lasted for his lifetime. The theological core of his pre-millennialism was his Christology, which made his prophetic system a 'Quasi-Christology', in which without the idea of 'sinful flesh' the system could not be fully explained or understood.

We cannot claim that his idea of Christ's sinful flesh was the source of his idea of pre-millennialism. As we have demonstrated in the previous chapters, Irving's theological interest in subjects did not develop in a clear systematic order. Rather, his ideas on various subjects grew in a rather eclectic manner.⁸⁹ As reflected in his main publications, his attention to millennialism preceded his distinctive views on the incarnation, that is, those views involving Christ's sinful flesh. However, as we have seen, both his millennialism and

⁸⁶ Ibid., 14, 60, 189.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 133, 195.

⁸⁹ For example, in 1823 he delivered a discourse on the John the Baptist and at the same time he worked on the Temptation based on Christ's real humanity. In 1826 Irving worked both on Christology and millennialism: he worked on the publication of *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses* at the same time he was translating Ben Ezra's *The Coming of Messiah in Glory*, with his lengthy preface. See Appendix.

his perception of Christ's sinful flesh were occupying Irving's mind from his early adulthood, and they seem to have developed together in his complex mind. This said, I argue that Irving's idea of Christ's genuine humanity (Christ's sinful flesh) was central to his theological framework.

Throughout his writings, Irving referred to Christ's genuine humanity and its consequence doctrines. As David Lee has observed, Irving's understanding of the humanity of Christ was an 'over-arching principle' to integrate his other Christian doctrines.⁹⁰ Irving's emphasis on the humanity of Christ and Christ's return in flesh are apparent in all his writings, and it gave them all an eschatological tendency. As Christ would come again in flesh, this second coming would be for Irving a decisive event in the history of this world.⁹¹ He, who 'was once manifested a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief' would be 'manifested as the only Potentate, the King of kings'.⁹²

Irving explained the creation, Christ's incarnation, and the Second Advent through this notion of Christ's genuine humanity; he believed that humanity was created in God's image and that Adam had been the type of Christ's later manifestation in true humanity.⁹³ Christ, the Second Man, then distinctly pointed to his Second Advent, as quoted in the Scripture: 'He shall come from heaven in like manner as he ascended into heaven'.⁹⁴ But, the Second Advent would be the glorified body of Christ that still retained the scars of suffering. This whole process was, for Irving, the journey of Christ ever manifested in full humanity.⁹⁵ The genuine humanity of Christ, along with the necessary work of the Holy Spirit, was at the core of Irving's thought. In this sense, Irving continued, the body of common believer would also be redeemed.⁹⁶ In sharing the same humanity with Christ, all human beings were

⁹⁰ Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 54.

⁹¹ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 77.

⁹² Ibid, 174.

⁹³ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Four Sermons* in *CW*, V, 93; Irving, 'On the Prophetical Aspect of All God's Works and Ways – 1. The Creation of Man', 56.

⁹⁴ Irving, 'On the Prophetical Aspect of All God's Works and Ways – 1. The Creation of Man', 57.

⁹⁵ *PW*, I, 6.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 11.

required to participate in Christ's suffering in this world. But Irving was certain that this suffering with their sinful flesh was not their final destination; rather it was regarded as a fulfilment of God's will and a looking forward to the *parousia*.

In Irving's millennial system, the location of body was a major concern, as he believed in Christ's 'personal coming, a coming in person'.⁹⁷ Irving's concern for the body reflected his emphasis on the true humanity of Christ: as Christ's body was laid in the tomb, after being crucified, and was resurrected and ascended to the right hand of God, so the believer's body would also suffer and 'raised incorruptible, like unto his glorious body', and brought to 'everlasting union with the Son their husband'.⁹⁸ The glory that Christ attained was 'by and in humanity's form, holding with an arm of flesh and guiding with faculties of reason'.⁹⁹ For Irving, 'Christ in the days of his flesh was the type of all his people'.¹⁰⁰ The destiny of humanity was revealed in Christ: 'The humanity of Christ acted in history creating the church and would actualise his reign in the millennium'.¹⁰¹ The church as a community of Christ's followers in sinful flesh was, for Irving, ever looking for their citizenship in heaven; 'Irving's christocentric and dispensational understanding of the redemptive history set the church in a movement towards the end and a progression of the world towards the *parousia*'.¹⁰² Irving thought that the Christian church was metaphysically in exile in the suffering world but that heaven was ultimately the church's home.¹⁰³ The tabernacle in the wilderness waiting to enter the promised land, or the gathering of the Jews in Jerusalem,

⁹⁷ E. Irving, 'The Second Advent of Our Lord, and His Everlasting Kingdom', in *Five Lectures, Delivered by Mr. Irving in 1829, at the Rotunda, Dublin, Taken in Short-hand by Mr. Hanley* (London: John Bennett, 1835), 57.

⁹⁸ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 189f.

⁹⁹ *PW*, I, 87.

¹⁰⁰ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 116.

¹⁰¹ G. McFarlane, 'Strange News from Another Star: An Anthropological Insight from Edward Irving' in *Persons, Divine and Human: King's College Essays in Theological Anthropology* (ed. Colin Gunton, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 107; Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 60.

¹⁰² Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 146.

¹⁰³ Irving, 'The Second Advent of Our Lord, and His Everlasting Kingdom', 62; Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 144.

were his representations of the church waiting for the New Jerusalem that would be achieved by Christ's physical return.¹⁰⁴

Irving believed Christ would return in the same physical form as he had ascended.¹⁰⁵ While Christ's first coming had been an appeal to the believer's faith, the Second Advent would be, for Irving, a realization of glory.¹⁰⁶ Christ's resurrection declared Him to be the Son of God and became the assurance of His coming again. 'The self revelation of God through the ascended humanity of Christ had a final and glorious reality in the eschatological kingdom'.¹⁰⁷ For his congregations in an uncertain age Irving gave a message of hope in supernatural and transcending way; in this world believers would receive power by the Holy Spirit and in the coming Kingdom they would be freed from the limitations of the physical body. Irving's expectation of liberation from bodily limitations in the context of the suffering world informs his millennial theme: 'we will groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, viz., the redemption of the body'.¹⁰⁸ In this suffering world, Christ's shared humanity with the common believer was, for Irving, vital to the Christian gospel because Christ 'is pleased to bring many sons unto glory by the same path of humanity and suffering'.¹⁰⁹

B.4. The Albury Conference

Not long after Irving started to preach about the Second Advent in 1825 (the same year that he met Frere), he developed a connection with Henry Drummond, a wealthy London banker (with Scottish roots) and also at one time High Sheriff of Surrey, after Drummond returned

¹⁰⁴ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 91f; *PW*, II, 108.

¹⁰⁵ Irving, 'The Second Advent of Our Lord, and His Everlasting Kingdom', 53.

¹⁰⁶ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 63, 164.

¹⁰⁷ Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 60.

¹⁰⁸ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 100.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

from Geneva.¹¹⁰ After a personal religious experience, Drummond had become a mainstay of the Continental Society – an organization established to ‘reform both the Socinian tendencies of the Protestant denominations and those suffering under popish Christianity in Europe’.¹¹¹

As an ‘old-fashioned Tory paternalist’, according to Grayson Carter, Drummond emphasized the need for authority in Church and State and the organic links between the various layers of the hierarchy, to which he added the radical notion of the ‘apostate nation’, or the idea that ‘the British were a people which had been chosen by God, but had rejected the spiritual duties which accompanied their elect status, and had wickedly abandoned the divine commission’.¹¹² Like Irving, Drummond had also experienced the loss of his three children, and that loss might have influenced Drummond’s fervent belief that the Judgment Day was close.¹¹³ Drummond was deeply influenced by Lewis Way’s idea of the Jews’ return to Palestine in accordance with prophecy, and of Christ’s return and reign in person on this earth. ‘A very striking man’ and ‘indeed universal gentleman’, in Thomas Carlyle’s description, Drummond encouraged Irving’s prophetic studies and by doing so, Carlyle further believed, he also ‘did Irving a great deal of ill’.¹¹⁴

In the summer of 1826 Irving became involved with the Society for the Investigation of Prophecy (along with Lewis Way and James Frere).¹¹⁵ The members of the Jews’ Society, including Drummond, were invited to the meetings. For a remote and quiet place for advanced chiliastic investigation, Drummond suggested opening his country house at Albury

¹¹⁰ Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle*, 127.

¹¹¹ Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 163. About H. Drummond before he met Irving, see, Rowland A. Davenport, *Albury Apostles: the Story of the Body Known as the Catholic Apostolic Church (Sometimes Called “The Irvingites”)* (London: Free Society, 1973), 15 – 20; Columba Graham Flegg, *‘Gathered Under Apostles’: A Study of the Catholic Apostolic Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 33-35.

¹¹² Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 166; Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, 108.

¹¹³ Hector Bolitho and Derek Peel, *The Drummonds of Charing Cross* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 140. Drummond’s loss of children; Henry, 1811-22, Malcolm, 1821-42, and Arthur, 1823-43.

¹¹⁴ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 286, 294. Through Irving, Drummond enjoyed an ‘intense friendship’ with Thomas Carlyle. See Bolitho, *The Drummonds of Charing Cross*, 139.

¹¹⁵ Flegg, *‘Gathered Under Apostles’*, 40; Robert Lively, ‘The Catholic Apostolic Church’ (D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1977), 49; cited in Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 176.

Park, Surrey.¹¹⁶ Drummond organized the first so-called ‘Albury Conference’ for exploring millennial subjects, including ‘the relationship between unfulfilled prophecy and the restoration of the Jews to their homeland’, and the meeting was held during Advent 1826 at Irving’s suggestion.¹¹⁷ People from a variety of groups, including Church of England clergy, Moravians, Nonconformist ministers, Church of Scotland ministers, and English laymen, attended for a full week’s retreat.¹¹⁸ But arguably the two most influential Evangelicals in Britain, Thomas Chalmers and William Wilberforce, both declined the invitation, and this suggests there were concerns that the conference might be dominated by extreme views.¹¹⁹

‘The great orator of Hatton Garden, who mixed with the London Evangelicals, often wearying his companions by the inordinate length of his eloquent expositions and his fervent prayers’—so John Stoughton described Irving’s association in Albury.¹²⁰ Irving’s description of the meeting provides a full illustration of the subjects discussed:

We spent six full days in close and laborious examination of the scriptures, upon these six great heads of the doctrine – First, The doctrine of holy scripture concerning the times of the Gentiles. Secondly, The duties of Christian ministers and people, growing out thereof towards the gentile churches. Thirdly, The doctrine concerning the present and future condition of the Jews. Fourthly, The duties growing out of the same towards the Jews. Fifthly, The system of the prophetic visions and numbers of Daniel and the Apocalypse. Sixthly, The scripture doctrine concerning the future advent of the Lord. And Lastly, The duties to the church and the world arising out of the same.¹²¹

A pre-millennial system was developed around the Circle’s belief that the Second Advent was impending and this event shaped their understanding of Scriptures. By expressing this knowledge, the Albury Circle believed they were conveying God’s will, and playing a useful role in the final stage of the world.

¹¹⁶ Davenport, *Albury Apostles*, 14.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.; Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 176f; Edward Irving to Henry Drummond, 4 Aug 1826, NLS.MS.1810.93.

¹¹⁸ Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, 191. For the full list of Albury attendances, see Columba Flegg, ‘Gathered Under Apostles’, 37f.

¹¹⁹ Miller, *The History and Doctrines of Irvingism*, I, 44; Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 177.

¹²⁰ John Stoughton, *Religion in England from 1800 to 1850: a History with a Postscript on Subsequent Events* in 2 Vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884), vol. I, 130.

¹²¹ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 198.

These annual meetings continued until 1830, and the results of their discussions were published in the journal, *Morning Watch*, with Drummond's financial support and John Tudor's editorial labours, between 1829 and 1833. This journal opposed religious and social liberalism, and most of its articles followed Irving's theological teachings. Its authors wrote as though they were watchmen on the walls of Zion—called on to descry every enemy and give warning of every danger, like the watchman in Isa. 21:12.¹²²

Historical Viewpoint

In their speculations on the mystery of coming kingdom, the Albury Circle claimed that the word of God was their sole text 'in its simple and literal meaning'; 'No appeal was allowed but to the Scriptures'.¹²³ The Scriptures comprised, they believed, the whole of the revelation of 'a complete *system* of Divine truth', through which '*a unity of design*' was manifest.¹²⁴

For Irving and the Albury Circle, the will of God was revealed in history, which was the panoramic background of God's activity.¹²⁵ Those who read the signs of the times could predict the imminent coming of the Lord.¹²⁶ However, from Irving's viewpoint, there were few who could read these 'signs', and he believed the religious world had 'shut up four-fifths, yea, nine-tenths of the sacred volume. All the prophecies they have spiritualised away'.¹²⁷ To understand what God intended to reveal through the prophecies the Circle looked to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁸

¹²² Andrews, *Edward Irving: A Review*, 61.

¹²³ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 200; John Tudor, 'The language of Heaven', *MW*, VI (1832), 231.

¹²⁴ J. A. Begg, 'On the Heresy of Hymeneus and Philetus concerning the First Resurrection', *MW*, II (1830), 329.

¹²⁵ Mark Patterson, 'Designing the Last Days: Edward Irving, The Albury Circle, and the Theology of The Morning Watch' (PhD. thesis, King's College, London, 2001), 71.

¹²⁶ John Tudor, 'The Book of the Church', *MW*, VI (1832), 100.

¹²⁷ Irving, 'Signs of the Times', *MW*, II (1830), 143.

¹²⁸ Irving, 'Interpretation of All the Old-Testament Prophecies', *MW*, I (1829), 14.

Imminent Advent & Edinburgh Preaching

The Albury prophetic system became a lens through which every historical event and doctrine was interpreted and applied. The Second Advent became the “*point de vue*,” the vantage ground ... from which alone, the whole purpose of God can be contemplated and understood’.¹²⁹ Through proper understanding of the prophecies, the Circle believed, they could animate the church and prepare for the coming tribulation and judgment. As Irving wrote:

I feel that I have a duty to discharge to the church in these interpretations, which is, to electrify her paralyzed faith, by bringing it into contact with that battery of truth concerning Israel’s restoration and Immanuel’s coming which is contained in the Prophets. The Lord prosper the remedy!¹³⁰

The Circle believed that the churches in the United Kingdom would ‘be visited and judged of God’ because of their ‘religious avarice’. ‘The time is uncertain’, for Irving, but it would be soon: ‘Behold, he standeth at the door’.¹³¹ For most of those attending Albury, their ‘preparation to meet Him should be now the sole object of stedfast faith, and earnest desire, and constant preparation’.¹³²

While he explored these prophetic subjects, Irving travelled to Edinburgh in 1828 to deliver this message to his homeland (he had earlier hoped that the prophetic message would have been first offered to the Church of Scotland).¹³³ The General Assembly was meeting in the city when Irving arrived; he had a difficulty in finding a preaching place and therefore gave his sermons in the early morning. As early as five o’clock, the pews were fully occupied, and even the celebrated Thomas Chalmers could not easily gain admittance. About Irving’s popularity in the City, Chalmers observed that ‘certainly there must have been a marvellous power of attraction that could turn a whole population out of their beds so

¹²⁹ Irving’s letter to Dr Chalmers, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 68.

¹³⁰ Irving, ‘Interpretation of All the Old-Testament Prophecies’, *MW*, II (1830), 83.

¹³¹ Irving, ‘Signs of the Times’, *MW*, I (1829), 653.

¹³² Anonym, ‘The Hour of Christ’s Appearance’, *MW*, IV (1831), 253.

¹³³ Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity*, xii.

early as five in the morning. The largest church in our metropolis was each time overcrowded. I heard him once; but I must just be honest enough and humble enough to acknowledge that I scarcely understand a single word, nor do I comprehend the ground on which he goes in his violent allegorizations, chiefly of the Old Testament.¹³⁴ Chalmers was in truth deeply worried about Irving's prophetic tendency, which might 'unship him altogether', and shook his head while he was talking to his wife about Irving's 'mingled fascination'.¹³⁵

Pessimism about Society

Irving and the Albury Circle's reproach of the churches 'of this and other lands' was related to their pessimistic world view, including their belief that widespread materialism had corrupted the Church. Irving denounced Evangelical missionary societies as 'these great money-getting societies'; 'it is a grand error to think they shall convert the world whose iniquity God is shewing out by their rejection of the Gospel; for which in due time he will come and judge them'.¹³⁶ His sermon to the London Missionary Society in 1824 can be understood from this perspective.

Christ's first and second comings, the Albury Circle believed, consisted on the one hand of the flesh of mortal suffering and on the other of the flesh of immortal glory; 'the one the dispensation of fleshly ordinances headed up in the Word made flesh, the other the dispensation of glory commencing in the Second Advent, and consummated at the end of the Millennium'.¹³⁷ At his first coming, Christ had cleansed 'the temple, and turned out the money-changers, who had made it a den of thieves'. 'The same charge', insisted the *Morning Watch*, 'might be made with equal justice now against the ministers of religion'.¹³⁸ For the

¹³⁴ Thomas Chalmers' letter to his sister, Mrs Morton, 18 June 1828, in William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers*, III, 221.

¹³⁵ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, I, 404; W. Hanna, *Chalmers*, III, 163.

¹³⁶ Irving, 'Signs of the Times', *MW*, I (1829), 656f.

¹³⁷ E. Irving, 'Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse', *MW*, VI (1832), 263.

¹³⁸ Anonym, 'No Gifts, No Perfect Church', *MW*, V (1832), 138.

Albury Circle, the established churches were made up of ‘those who are lovers of their own institutions, and of wealth; boasters of their charitable, and missionary exploits; lovers of expediency rather than of principle; laying false accusations; speaking against the plain letter of God’s Word; and yet having the form, circumstance, and profession of godliness’.¹³⁹

Irving claimed to experience this ‘den of thieves’ when he was once asked to preach in a church in Perth, Scotland, and everyone had to pay silver on entering the church. As he entered the pulpit, Irving solemnly protested against the practice.¹⁴⁰ Referring to those churches which ‘openly avowed that money is the chief desideratum’, Irving warned that at the Second Advent, Christ would cleanse the temple and cast out the money changers.¹⁴¹

Catholic Emancipation

In his millennial vision, Irving regarded Britain as one of the ‘sealed’ or ‘elected’ nations.¹⁴² The victory of Trafalgar (1805) was portrayed as a sign of Britain’s identity as a ‘sealed and elected nation’. Great Britain was, for Irving, perceived in parallel with the Jewish nation as being ‘preserved from the ravage’.¹⁴³

Viewing the ‘papal system as the great whore of Babylon ... [and] the Roman hierarchy, with the pope at its head, [as] the very synagogue of Satan’, Irving strenuously opposed Catholic Emancipation. Should the British Parliament enact Catholic Emancipation, he warned, ‘our national character is forfeited in heaven, and we are sealed no longer’.¹⁴⁴ Henry Drummond also showed his strong distaste for it: ‘What madness it is to think that the miseries of the Irish people will be alleviated by emancipation’.¹⁴⁵ For the Albury Circle, it

¹³⁹ Henry Drummond, *A Defence of the Students of Prophecy: In Answer to the Attack of the Rev. Dr. Hamilton, of Strathblane* (London: J. Nisbet, 1828), 116.

¹⁴⁰ Henry Drummond, *Dialogues on Prophecy* vol. 3 (London: James Nisbet, 1829), 347.

¹⁴¹ Irving, ‘Signs of the Times’, *MW*, I (1829), 655; Anonym, ‘No Gifts, No Perfect Church’, *MW*, V (1832), 138.

¹⁴² Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God*, 185-8; *PW*, I, 52.

¹⁴³ Irving, ‘Signs of the Times’, *MW*, I (1829), 642.

¹⁴⁴ Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God*, 546.

¹⁴⁵ Drummond’s letter to John Wilson Croker on Feb. 26, 1825, in Hector Bolitho, *The Drummonds of Charing Cross* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 138.

was a question of Religion and Infidelity, of Christ and Antichrist. When the Emancipation Act was passed in 1829, Irving published *The Church and State Responsible to Christ*, denouncing the Act with prophetic fury.¹⁴⁶ The Act would cause ‘national guilt’ and be ‘a great evil in the sight of God’, which would speedily bring the nation to ruin.¹⁴⁷

Being Sectarian

Irving and the Albury members believed that they were living in the time between the outpouring of the sixth and seventh vials, described in the sixteenth chapter of Revelation.¹⁴⁸ For them, theirs was a time of unprecedented crisis, and only national repentance would save their nation and church from judgment.¹⁴⁹

They wanted the world to heed their prophetic voice and repent in preparation for the coming kingdom, but the world did not do as they had wished. In response, the Circle grew more rigid in their prophetic system. Irving and Drummond came to believe seriously that popery and the established churches were ‘twin apostasies’.¹⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the growing criticism of Irving’s theology, including his Christology and views on the spiritual gifts, were leaving the Albury Circle increasingly isolated. The *Morning Watch* portrayed Irving’s idea of ‘sinful flesh’ as ‘the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the ending, of orthodox theology’.¹⁵¹ The Circle tried to demonstrate that the manifestations of the supernatural gifts were fulfilments of the prophetic word, and ‘symptoms’ of the approaching millennial kingdom. Hatley Frere and William Cuninghame of Lainshaw left because they could not go along with the Circle’s views on the restoration

¹⁴⁶ Brown, *The National Churches*, 254.

¹⁴⁷ E. Irving, *The Church and State Responsible to Christ, And to One Another: A Series of Discourses on Daniel’s Vision of the Four Beasts* (London: James Nisbet, 1829), 300.

¹⁴⁸ Anonym, ‘The Hour of Christ’s Appearance’, *MW*, IV (1831), 254; Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 199.

¹⁴⁹ Patterson, ‘Designing the Last Days’, 61.

¹⁵⁰ Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, 108.

¹⁵¹ Irving, ‘On the True Humanity of Christ’, *MW*, I (1829), 422; Anonym, ‘On the Likeness of Sinful Flesh’, *MW*, II (1830); Warrand Carlile (An Elder of the Church of Scotland), ‘On the Human Nature of Christ’, *MW*, III (1831), 112-137.

of the Jews, the role of Britain in its accomplishment, and the ‘unbridled passion, emphasis on spiritual gifts as an element of the last days, and the perspective that the small band of prophetic students stood at the focal point of God’s activity’.¹⁵²

The Albury conception of the Roman Catholic Church as Babylon was widened to include the Established Churches of the United Kingdom and then all of Christendom.¹⁵³ Irving explained that by ‘Babylon I mean the whole system of doctrine and discipline and customs, actually existing and practically governing Christians in this and every land upon the earth’.¹⁵⁴ All the churches of ‘this and other lands’ were portrayed as harlot churches. Irving maintained that ‘The churches will cast out the children of God, with their gold and silver, and their precious stones, as Egypt thrust Israel out.’¹⁵⁵ ‘I know not one pastor, or one church of a truly faithful uncompromising character’, he added, ‘which hath not either been cast out, or against which proceedings are not already begun’.¹⁵⁶

In 1832, it will be recalled, Irving was legally evicted from his Regent Square church by the trustees. Perceiving that ‘the churches in this land are Babylon’, Irving claimed at this time that like John the Baptist in the wilderness ‘every one should flee out of the spiritual Babylon with which we are surrounded, by testifying against it, and keeping ourselves apart from the unholy thing’.¹⁵⁷ ‘Anyone who has an ear’, he continued, ‘come out of Babylon, and fight against her ... For “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent taken it by force”’.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Patterson, ‘Designing the Last Days’, 217.

¹⁵³ H. Drummond’s concept of ‘Babylon’ widely impacted on Irving. See, Henry Drummond, *Dialogues on Prophecy* vol. 2, 264.

¹⁵⁴ Irving, ‘Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse’, *MW*, VI (1832), 269.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁵⁷ Irving, ‘Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse’, *MW*, V (1832), 324.

¹⁵⁸ E. Irving, ‘The Responsibility of a Baptized Man, of a Preacher of the Gospel, and of a Pastor in Christ’s Flock, to Christ and the Church’, *MW*, VI (1832), 450.

C. Open Possibility for the Coming Kingdom

C.1. Irving's Ecclesiology

Irving's understanding of ecclesiology formed an important element of his pre-millennialism. He had a traditional understanding of the Church, as the congregation of Christian believers that 'the body wherein God pleaseth to dwell', and he also held to the classic dichotomy between the visible and invisible Church.¹⁵⁹ While the invisible Church was preserved against vital error, the visible Church – the 'Church in flesh', in Irving's term – could err.¹⁶⁰ Stressing on 'proper ecclesiastical order and appealing to a typical Coleridgean rationale' Irving's ecclesiology had the Coleridgean aura of exalted ecclesiology.¹⁶¹

It was Irving's belief that Christ's second manifestation in the flesh would bring the glorification of his church.¹⁶² As Irving believed that the church was 'intended to exhibit the glory of Christ's risen body', his idea of the church conjures the *Parousia*.¹⁶³ In Irving's eschatological vision, the Church would be perfected by Christ's second coming. Irving described the Church at Christ's return in terms of the relationship between Adam and Eve. God made Eve out of Adam while he was asleep, which meant, in Irving's thought, that they were of the same substance. The parallel would be the relationship between the Lord and his bride, the Church. The Church was, for Irving, 'preparation of the kingdom'; the Church would become of 'perfect stature' when Christ, 'her Lord', would come into this world again and take her as his bride to himself 'as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh'.¹⁶⁴ In terms of supernatural gifts, Irving saw that Church was 'not only the container of the manifested God,

¹⁵⁹ E. Irving, 'Sermons in Manuscripts' (London: 1833), 2. [MS General 791 at Glasgow University Library]; *PW*, I, 191. Irving described visible Church as 'the Church in flesh'.

¹⁶⁰ Irving, *The Parable of the Sower*, in *CW*, I, 140.

¹⁶¹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 80.

¹⁶² Irving, 'The Second Advent of Our Lord, and His Everlasting Kingdom', 59.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶⁴ *PW*, I, 182; Irving, 'The Antediluvian Dispensation', 12.

but she is the actor of His works, and the utterance of His wisdom'.¹⁶⁵ As the church represents the holiness and the power of Christ's risen body, so too the church had a supernatural power from the Holy Spirit: 'the gifts of tongues, of miracles, the discernment of spirits, and of casting out devils'.¹⁶⁶ Through these gifts of the Spirit, common believers could have a foretaste of the glory of the Last Day 'when Christ would return in his exalted, bodily form to establish the new heaven and earth', through the church in the power of the Spirit.¹⁶⁷ None the less, since Christ was the head of the Church, the visible Church was 'the sensible form of the heavenly communion'.¹⁶⁸

Irving also compared Church and state to the Divine and human natures in Christ, arguing that 'there is perfect distinctness yet closest union'.¹⁶⁹ Since the king had the duty to establish the Christian Church, the Catholic Emancipation Act meant that the king had become like 'the shepherd who openeth the door for the wolf to come in'.¹⁷⁰ 'The passing of this Papacy-legalizing Bill' was brought about by God's hand as 'the means of causing the cry of Babylon's judgment' and 'its judgments are near to come'.¹⁷¹

C.2. Mystical Union in the Sacraments

Irving became convinced that the secret of the heavenly kingdom would be found through an exploration of the sacraments, in which the work of the Holy Spirit was vital. For Irving, baptism was regarded as bringing the remission of sins, and the death and burial of the sinful flesh. After baptism, believers stood no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit.¹⁷² In the eyes of God, Irving claimed, in baptism believers died with Christ, their 'old man crucified with

¹⁶⁵ Irving, *On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost Commonly Called Supernatural*, in *CW*, V, 518.

¹⁶⁶ Irving, 'The Second Advent of Our Lord, and His Everlasting Kingdom', 63.

¹⁶⁷ Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 23f.

¹⁶⁸ E. Irving, *For Missionaries after the Apostolic School* (New York: E. Bliss & E. White, 1825), 79.

¹⁶⁹ Irving, *The Church and State Responsible to Christ, And to One Another*, 563.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 425.

¹⁷² Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 518.

Him, the body of sin destroyed'; after that, 'the work of the Spirit must be unto the generation, the quickening, the forming of a new man'.¹⁷³

In the Lord's Supper, Irving also believed, attendants 'receive nothing corporal nor carnal, but the Spirit only'.¹⁷⁴ Irving claimed that God was presence in the Lord's Supper, spiritually feeding every believer.¹⁷⁵ By receiving the Holy Spirit, which had enabled Christ to subsist without sin in flesh and blood, believers were mystically united to Him.¹⁷⁶ Thus, by the work of the Holy Spirit, believers could participate in Christ's mystical body, even in this world. Christ presented to God the sacrifice of His own flesh and blood, and gave the seal of this to His Church in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.¹⁷⁷ He could 'sanctify the sinful vessel of His humanity' and present it without sin. By the power of the Spirit, Christ's mortal body had changed into an immortal body, and when the same Spirit worked in believers, Irving argued, their flesh and blood was no longer of Adam but of Christ glorified.¹⁷⁸ As baptism did not partially destroy the flesh, but completely, so the Spirit did not partially renew the flesh, but completely.¹⁷⁹ In the Eucharist, Irving believed, this was also revealed; by eating of His flesh and drinking His blood, attendants would 'receive another action of the Holy Ghost than creation, which is regeneration and renewal in the image of God'. Irving maintained that by taking the bread in faith, common believers participated in His body and through the work of the Spirit experienced 'the perfect and complete communion of the body of Christ'.¹⁸⁰

Irving asserted that the sacraments were the substance of the 'earthly things' but the type of heavenly things.¹⁸¹ Baptism and the Lord's Supper quickened believers in a life of holiness. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost, moreover, ushered them into the fellowship of

¹⁷³ Ibid., 547.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 550.

¹⁷⁵ *PW*, I, 262.

¹⁷⁶ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 533.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 519.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 545.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 547.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 545.

¹⁸¹ Irving, 'Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse', *MW*, V (1832), 319.

Christ's heavenly life and the Lord's Supper provided continual nourishment from the risen body of Christ. In this mystical sense, for Irving, these sacraments brought 'a real presence of the Father and the Son into the soul of the believer'.¹⁸²

Irving explained this in Trinitarian language; in the plan of the Father, the Son united with fallen manhood. Then, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit 'into the virgin's substance, with which the Son united'.¹⁸³ With the power of the Spirit, the Son brought the unholy to the perfectly holy. Irving extended this imagery to human beings; 'by the same divine co-operation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost', common believers could have holy, harmless, undefiled manhood out of unholy, sinful, and fallen manhood, 'confirmed not now to the similitude of Adam's body, but to the similitude of Christ's body'.¹⁸⁴ At the Lord's Supper, attendants received God's power to sanctify and overcome carnal flesh, nourish a holy nature, which, afterwards, raise the body from the grave, and fashion it like Christ's glorious body.¹⁸⁵ This mystical union on earth would be developed into a divine marriage when Christ returned; the believers and Christ would become one flesh as 'the Lamb and bride of the Lamb'.¹⁸⁶

C.3. The Union with Suffering

Irving's Christological millennialism viewed the believer's final attainment of glory in terms of Christ's earthly ministry. From the Christological perspective, Irving urged believers to follow in Christ's steps in order to participate in God's glory, in which 'sinful flesh' would play an essential role. Under the law, Jesus suggested himself as the model of the earthly

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 549.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 68.

¹⁸⁶ E. Irving, 'On the Prophetical Aspect of All God's Works and Ways – 1. The Creation of Man', *MW*, VII (1833), 71.

man – that is, as the ‘perfect and upright man which the law can make’.¹⁸⁷ Irving maintained that Christ’s conflict with evil was physical and that ‘Satan wrestled a fall with flesh’.¹⁸⁸ Christ, the Word became flesh, was given no advantage in this conflict; for if Christ had ‘other flesh than mortal flesh’, it would have given Satan the victory. As we have seen, Christ’s ‘sinful flesh’, was, for Irving, ‘the way in which the name of God in the creation of man is to be glorified; the good and glorious ends of flesh justified’.¹⁸⁹

For Irving, flesh was ‘the harp on which God telleth out his sorrow over his lost children’.¹⁹⁰ The baptism of Jesus in flesh brought him into the fellowship of God’s sorrows and sufferings over his poor distracted children.¹⁹¹ Christ’s sorrow in Gethsemane was not so much over his forthcoming crucifixion; rather it was, according to Irving, over his disciples’ lack of faith.¹⁹²

‘Flesh was created to manifest God’s perfect image’ and Christ became perfect through suffering.¹⁹³ Likewise, Irving believed, common believers could be made perfect through suffering. Participating in Christ’s sufferings led them to his love.¹⁹⁴ For Irving, what Christ had worked in flesh was a work for all flesh; ‘Jesus became Lord of living flesh by right of redemption; and He hath conveyed by His victorious life unto all men a redemption from the slavery and bondage of sin’.¹⁹⁵ Irving further argued that Christ’s suffering, not only on the Cross but throughout his earthly life, was the seed of His victory—a victory that could be achieved by common believers as well. Believers, who had the same flesh, could obtain God’s glory through participating in suffering in the flesh.¹⁹⁶ With suffering, Irving insisted, ‘an imperturbable and inexhaustible joy’ can be obtained within

¹⁸⁷ E. Irving, ‘Jesus Our Ensample, that We should Follow His Steps’, *MW*, VI (1832), 104.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁹⁰ Irving, ‘Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse’, *MW*, VI (1832), 274.

¹⁹¹ Irving, ‘Jesus Our Ensample, that We should Follow His Steps’, *MW*, VI (1832), 105.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 116f.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 110; Irving, ‘Interpretation of All the Old-Testament Prophecies’, *MW*, IV (1831), 310.

¹⁹⁴ Irving, ‘Jesus Our Ensample, that We should Follow His Steps’, *MW*, VI (1832), 319.

¹⁹⁵ Irving, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in CW*, V, 174.

¹⁹⁶ *PW*, II, 398.

the divine life; 'For the joy that is set before us we endure the cross. By the fullness of the joy that is in us we rejoice in tribulation also'.¹⁹⁷ For Irving, the believer's suffering would be compensated for by the heavenly joy, which would be experienced through Christ's second coming 'in a cloud of glory'.¹⁹⁸

C.4. Potential of All People

In the Christological perspective, eschatology provides the final phase of the incarnate Christ's place in God's saving design for humanity. As we have seen in Irving's conception of man, the human was the type of the Second Adam, made in the likeness of sinful flesh.¹⁹⁹ Irving viewed history as the accomplishment of God's plan, and believed that God's eternal blessing for humanity would be suspended until the Second Advent.

For Irving and the Albury Circle, the body was an 'indispensable factor' in the pattern of God's blessing for all humanity.²⁰⁰ As Irving's idea of universal atonement had an intimate relation with his idea of real humanity,²⁰¹ so the work of Christ in the flesh had its consequences for all humanity. For Irving, Christ's work in the flesh was to bring believers 'into the hope and confidence of little children towards God'.²⁰² He held that all believers, as children of God, could expect to be lifted 'out of mortal estate, into that spiritual excellence of glory' because they are the members of not only Christ in flesh but also Christ in glory.²⁰³ The Spirit, which raised Jesus up from the dead, according to Irving, would also quicken their mortal bodies and lead them to the spiritual life. As believers suffered with Christ, they would also be glorified as His joint-heirs.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Irving, 'Jesus Our Ensample, that We should Follow His Steps', *MW*, VI (1832), 320.

¹⁹⁸ Irving, 'Interpretation of All the Old-Testament Prophecies', *MW*, II (1830), 71.

¹⁹⁹ See, chapter III, A.1.

²⁰⁰ FIDUS, 'Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Apocalyptic Churches', *MW*, II (1830), 757.

²⁰¹ See, chapter I, B.2.c.

²⁰² Irving, 'Jesus Our Ensample, that We should Follow His Steps', *MW*, VI (1832), 116.

²⁰³ Irving, 'Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse', *MW*, V (1832), 319.

²⁰⁴ Irving, *Homilies on Baptism* in *CW*, II, 279.

Irving portrayed the relationship between Christ and believers as a reflection of the relationship between Adam and Eve; God created Eve out of a rib from Adam's side, which was his substance, and Eve united with Adam as his spouse. Christ is the head of the church, and the body of the church consists of believers, who have the same flesh and blood. Their union would be exalted by the divine marriage, which would happen at His coming. As Adam and Eve became one flesh by marriage, so believers could expect a perfect union with their Saviour 'by the Divine tie of marriage'.²⁰⁵

So far as believer's 'glorious body' is concerned, Irving could claim biblical support from 1 Cor. 15 and Rom. 8. After Christ had completed His earthly ministry, He had said 'it is finished' (John 19:30), and, at the resurrection, His sinful flesh was changed into a glorified body by the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁶ The Spirit, which raised up Jesus from the dead, could also enter humanity; God could also quicken mortal bodies by his Spirit (Rom. 8:11).²⁰⁷ By the work of the Spirit, Irving maintained, believers would be manifested as the sons of God and 'shall receive our glorious bodies, with which to dwell in that city, New Jerusalem'.²⁰⁸

The travails of common believers 'shall be delivered into a glorious liberty in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God'.²⁰⁹ Through the union of Christ and the Church in the millennial kingdom, believers would be 'those who are to subdue and have dominion over the creation which lieth beyond the paradise of the kingdom'.²¹⁰ But, to gain this glory and enjoy perfect union with Christ, individuals had to suffer.²¹¹ Irving regarded suffering as necessary to achieve a genuine victory over the apostasy and infidelity of this world.

²⁰⁵ Irving, 'On the Prophetical Aspect of All God's Works and Ways – 1. The Creation of Man', *MW*, VII (1833), 61.

²⁰⁶ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 279.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 278f.

²⁰⁸ Irving, 'On the Prophetical Aspect of All God's Works and Ways – 1. The Creation of Man', *MW*, VII (1833), 72.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

²¹¹ Irving, 'Jesus Our Ensample, that We should Follow His Steps', *MW*, VI (1832), 310.

Through suffering, Irving argued, common believers would be glorified as ‘heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ’.²¹²

C.5. Endowment of Gifts and the ‘Time’

As we noted briefly in the previous chapter, Irving had theological difficulties concerning the restoration of the spiritual gifts in his day. Although he was sure about the genuineness of the alleged spiritual gifts, he questioned whether he should stir up his congregation to seek those ‘spiritual treasures’.²¹³ He also had difficulties understanding why the gifts had returned at this time. Concerning the cessation of the spiritual gifts, Irving explained that ‘they have decayed just as faith and holiness have decayed’.²¹⁴ But why had the spiritual gifts apparently now returned?

To understand Irving’s difficulty on this issue, reviewing the sources of the alleged gifts may give us a clue. From the Christological point of view, as we observed in the previous chapter, Irving believed that he had strong theological evidence to support the continual manifestations of the Spirit through supernatural gifts. But, this does not explain why Irving hesitated to recommend the gifts to his congregation. Concerning the restoration of the supernatural gifts in Irving’s Circle, it is possible that Irving understood it as a sign of the approaching Second Advent.²¹⁵ Irving certainly interpreted Joel’s prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2: 28, 29) as a promise that the spiritual gifts would be restored in the millennial kingdom.²¹⁶ In the Albury Circle, and among other contemporary prophetic students as well, the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days was generally referred to as ‘the

²¹² Irving, ‘On the Prophetical Aspect of All God’s Works and Ways – 1. The Creation of Man’, *MW*, VII (1833), 73.

²¹³ Irving, ‘Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts’, 756.

²¹⁴ Irving, *The Church, with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power*, in *CW*, V, 499.

²¹⁵ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 104; John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 78.

²¹⁶ Irving, ‘Interpretation of All the Old-Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New Testament’, *MW*, II (1830), 302.

latter rain'. 'The former rain had come upon the Jews alone at Pentecost, by which the church has been nourished ... but when the latter rain will come, then will come the fullness of the harvest of the world', followed by return of 'the mighty God ... the prince of peace'.²¹⁷ This gift of tongues was, for Irving, 'intended as a seal against the fearful day of the Lord'.²¹⁸

While pre-millennialism has been described as representing a pessimistic worldly view, Irving's version did have its optimistic aspects. Irving strongly denounced the depravity of the whole of society and claimed the imminence of the Second Advent. However, at the same time, he insisted that the earth must be restored to its original goodness in purity.²¹⁹ For him, Christ's return was one of the great promises of Scripture, and it was 'the most hopeful sign' that 'the Lord himself hath returned to the midst of us, with the light of knowledge and with the voice of preaching'.²²⁰ Although he sometimes tried to calculate the estimated 'time' of the Second Advent,²²¹ his general view was that 'the judgments are near, but the time is uncertain'.²²² He did, to be sure, warn of divine judgment on 'the wicked nations of Christendom'.²²³ But this was to encourage Great Britain, coming out of such an infidel situation, as an 'elected and sealed nation' to claim its rightful status.²²⁴ Thus Irving's pre-millennialism had its optimistic aspect. Irving had a different perspective from that of his Albury friends: while most within the Albury Circle viewed this world as divided into the followers of Christ and the followers of Antichrist²²⁵, Irving continued to see a possibility of restoring the apostolic Christian faith and order. For Irving, pre-millennialism became 'Romantic pastoral-care tools': 'it had a transformational goal in the present to

²¹⁷ Henry Drummond, *Dialogues on Prophecy* vol. I, 115.

²¹⁸ *PW*, I, 705.

²¹⁹ Irving, *The Church and State Responsible to Christ, And to One Another*, 563; Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, 105.

²²⁰ *PW*, I, x.

²²¹ Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity*, 208, 420; Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 199.

²²² Irving, 'Signs of the Times', *MW*, I (1829), 653; *PW*, I, x, 41.

²²³ Irving, 'Interpretation of All the Old-Testament Prophecies', *MW*, I (1829), 325.

²²⁴ *PW*, I, 216.

²²⁵ John Tudor, 'Conclusion of the Morning Watch', *MW*, VII (1833), 399.

renew and revitalise the Church and to inspire confidence in God's overarching care, regardless of immediate circumstances'.²²⁶ He became convinced that 'the normal Christian life was not a struggle but a fulfilment; not a depression, but a hope for the return of Christ'.²²⁷ The expectation of Christ in glorified flesh suggested 'moments of epiphany in believers' lives to effect lasting transformation'.²²⁸ He called for continual repentance, which could and would restore Britain to its sealed state.²²⁹

To return to the question of the time of the Second Advent, Irving could neither give assurance for the restoration of spiritual gifts in his days, nor could he lead his congregation to pray for receiving it before the Port Glasgow incidents.²³⁰ As noted above, Irving differed from most other Albury Circle members in his interpretations of 'the tidings of the restoration of the gift of tongues in the west of Scotland'. While for most Albury members, the events in Scotland were a sign of the imminent Second Advent, Irving was not sure that 'now is the time'. He welcomed the Port Glasgow incidents, as they confirmed his view that spiritual gifts should exist in common believers through their union with Christ.²³¹ If the 'unfaithfulness' of the Church had caused the disappearance of the Spirit's manifestation, the Church's return to true faith would restore 'these spiritual treasures'. However, Irving was not sure that the manifestations signalled 'the last days', and he sent a group to Port Glasgow to investigate the phenomena of its genuineness. When he became convinced that the gifts were from God, he encouraged his congregation to pray that they might have the gifts, while he lamented that 'there are no fruits of the Spirit in the church at present, but fruits of Sodom and Gomorrah'.²³² He thought the spiritual gifts would be abundant in the Church until Christ would come again.²³³ Having no idea when the Second Advent would come, Irving

²²⁶ Elliot, 'Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis', 246.

²²⁷ Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 150.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Irving, 'The Responsibility of a Baptized Man', *MW*, VI (1832), 450.

²³⁰ Irving, 'Facts Connected with Recent Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts', 756.

²³¹ Ibid., 755; Irving, *The Church, with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power*, in *CW*, V, 470.

²³² Irving, 'Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse', *MW*, VI (1832), 268.

²³³ *PW*, I, 707.

just preached the immediate restoration of the gifts by true faith in the Church. Irving would have been more clearly understood if he had considered this issue only within his Christology. However, he was not entirely free from Albury Circle's 'time' schedule, obsessed by the contemporary pre-millennialism.

D. Toward Irving's Own Eschatology

D.1. After Eviction

When Irving was evicted from Regent Square by the London Presbytery, the *Morning Watch* described it in apocalyptic terms: 'Mr. Irving and his Church have been ejected from Babylon, and have found a refuge in the jaws of Antichrist'.²³⁴ For Irving's followers, this event was 'of far greater importance than the ejection of Luther from the Papacy'.²³⁵ Irving and his followers found temporary place of worship in a large room in Gray's Inn Road and later moved into West's picture gallery in Newman Street.

After the new flock formed, the supposed spiritual manifestations did not stop, and this alienated some of Irving's friends. A. J. Scott, for example, had serious doubts about the manifestations and he separated himself from Irving and his church; their difference was 'as the north to the south pole'.²³⁶ Thomas Erskine, who had initially proclaimed the genuineness of the Port-Glasgow manifestations, changed his mind and was 'very much shaken indeed as to the whole matter of the gifts'.²³⁷ For Erskine, the ordinances of the newly established sect, later the Catholic Apostolic Church, seemed as extraordinary as 'their snares'. In a letter to Irving, Erskine questioned the spiritual validity of the Catholic Apostolic Church: 'Now, you require this outward faith, but without any outward foundation

²³⁴ Anonym, 'The Ark of God in the Temple of Dagon', *MW*, V (1832), 441.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ See, Erskine, *Letters*, I, 205; Lake Leman, 'A Garden of Graves', in *Sunday at Home* (1881), 664f.

²³⁷ T. Erskine to Mrs. Macnabb [McLeod Campbell's sister], 23 Jan 1834', in Erskine, *Letters*, I, 207.

... My dear friend, what I feel in your letter is the entire annihilation by it of all true personal, spiritual religion or conscious communion with God.'²³⁸

As a cholera epidemic swept through England, Irving described it as 'Job's affliction', and the result of 'worldly sin', which could be healed by 'another gifts of healing by the same Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:9).²³⁹ He continued to exercise an active ministry, preaching at several places in London.

D.2. Deposition from the Established Church

After Irving's views were discussed in the General Assembly of 1831, a Committee of the Assembly had urged the Presbytery of Annan to depose him from the ministry of the Established Church of Scotland. In March 1833, accordingly, the Presbytery called Irving to answer charges of teaching heretical doctrine concerning the sinfulness of Christ's humanity. Irving's eviction from the Regent Square church might have given him an excuse to avoid the trial and foregone verdict before the Presbytery. But his veneration for Scottish Presbyterianism brought him to travel north and answer the summons from his mother church.

On the morning of 13 March, 'hundreds of individuals of all classes kept pouring into Annan from the neighbourhood'.²⁴⁰ By mid-day, the appointed time for the proceedings to commence in the parish church, 'the place was literally crammed' with about two thousand spectators. Irving was accused of 'printing, publishing, and disseminating heresies and heretical doctrines, particularly the doctrine of the fallen state and sinfulness of our Lord's human nature', as expressed in his books, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine* and *The Day of Pentecost*, and his article entitled 'A Judgement upon the Decision of the Last General Assembly' in the *Morning Watch*. Although Mr. James Roddick of Gretna, Moderator of the

²³⁸ T. Erskine to Edward Irving, 16 Oct 1834', in Ersine, *Letters*, I, 231.

²³⁹ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 308f.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., II, 343.

Presbytery, and Dr Henry Duncan of Ruthwell, Clerk to the Presbytery, understood Irving had not maintained that Christ had ever sinned, they could not abide his idea of Christ's 'sinful' nature, which seemed to them the equivalent of Hugh McLean's views on Christ's 'peccability', for which McLean had recently been deposed.

During the proceedings, Irving spoke for nearly two hours in defence of his doctrine. Irving insisted that he was outside the Presbytery's jurisdiction, and that he had agreed to appear before them, not for the injury done to himself, but to the Lord: 'I stand at your bar by no constraint of man. You could not – no person on earth could – have brought me hither ... I am a free man on a free soil; and living beyond your bounds, neither General Assembly nor Pope has a right to meddle with me ... I stand here, not by any constraint of conscience, but willingly'.²⁴¹ He rebuked the General Assembly, which had ordered the trial, and the Presbytery, which acted like 'the deputies of the General Assembly'. With swelling rhetoric, he portrayed the General Assembly now 'as one of the most wicked of all gods assemblies upon the face of the earth' and a 'Synagogue of Satan'.²⁴²

For Irving, it was also an 'apocalyptic' moment. He warned of God's judgment upon those who executed an 'injury to the Lord': 'But the judge standeth at the door. Ah! But he cometh in grace – mercy and truth go before his face. He cometh with the voice of the Baptist – "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Yea, he cometh in love, and if ye will cry unto him, he will pour ye out a blessing.'²⁴³ To the Presbytery, he exclaimed, 'Take off the bands of your neck. Shake off the traditions of men, and oh, rise from the dust, thou virgin daughter of Zion!'²⁴⁴ After finding that Irving believed his doctrine 'to be solid truth' and that his doctrine was the same as that of McLean, the Moderator asked if Irving could have any objection to the verdict of 'guilty as libelled'. At this, Irving shouted,

²⁴¹ *Trial of Mr. Edward Irving, Late Minister of the National Scotch Church, Regent Square, London; Before the Presbytery of Annan, on 13th March, 1833; with an Appendix* (Dumfries: Journal Office, 1833), 37f.

²⁴² Irving's letter to the Ministers and Elders of the Presbytery of Annan, 13 Oct, 1832, in *Trial of Irving in Annan*, 10; New College Library, Box 9.3.19.

²⁴³ *Trial of Irving in Annan*, 39.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

‘Objection! All objection. I object not for my own sake, but for the sake of Christ my Lord, whom I serve and honour ... I object for the Church’s sake’. When Nicholas Sloan, minister of Dornock and the senior member of Presbytery, was about pray, before the formal sentence was read out, David Dow, the late minister of Irongray who had accompanied Irving during his trial, exclaimed, ‘Arise, depart! Flee ye out, flee ye out of her! Ye cannot pray! How can ye pray? How can ye pray to Christ whom ye deny? Ye cannot pray. Depart, depart! Flee, flee!’²⁴⁵ As the darkened hall was lit by a ‘solitary candle’, it was hard to see who was shouting out these words. Dow then left the hall, followed by Irving, who exclaimed as he departed, ‘Stand forth! Stand forth! Why will ye not obey the voice of the Holy Ghost? As many as will obey the voice of the Holy Ghost let them depart’.²⁴⁶ Once Irving was gone, the Presbytery proceeded to pronounced him no longer a minister or member of the Church of Scotland.

D.3. Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church

After being deposed, Irving remained in Scotland, preaching in the open-air and attracting crowds. When he returned to London, the congregation in Newman Street did not welcome him ‘with extraordinary honours as a martyr’; rather, as he was deprived of pastoral status by the Church of Scotland, his flock no longer permitted him to exercise ministerial work. Although disappointed with this ‘extraordinary proceeding’, Irving waited patiently until he was re-ordained as ‘angel or chief pastor’ of the Newman Street congregation. When the *Morning Watch* ceased its publication, Irving wrote no more.

Drummond’s group, meanwhile, had gradually merged with Irving’s congregation. John Bate Cardale and Henry Drummond together led the congregation in Newman Street, after their ordination to the ‘Apostleship’ by what they described as a ‘divine call’. Within

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 58.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.; Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 349.

this new flock, later called the Catholic Apostolic Church, Irving's role was highly constrained. In a 'less independent' position than before, he had difficulty in adapting to the new ecclesiastical system.²⁴⁷ Irving could do nothing on his own initiative in this body, which was 'more Drummondite than Irvingite'; 'It was no longer his part to draw conclusions from the prophecies'.²⁴⁸ The fact that Irving had never exercised any of the alleged gifts also served to minimize his authority.²⁴⁹ Before his re-ordination, Irving had been blocked by Cardale from administering the sacraments. He looked to God, but 'God's ways were dark to His all-trusting servant'.²⁵⁰ In the Catholic Apostolic Church Irving's place was hardly that of founder; 'rather, he played the part of a catalyst'.²⁵¹ Indeed, men who assumed the apostleship gradually made 'the voice of the prophets subordinate to their superior office ... [and] the church gradually became remodelled upon quite another basis'.²⁵² Irving's status had fallen, in the view of his friend, Thomas Carlyle, to that of a 'degraded slave of bloated, inflated, deceiving elders'.²⁵³ The Elders, now Irving's 'imperious taskmasters', with 'inflated with spiritual pride' made Irving their 'thral [sic] instead of being the Angel of the Church'. William Graham of Burnswark, who supported Irving, wished Carlyle could do something for Irving 'to break the chains and throw off the manacles of these agents of Hell'.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁷ Andrews, *Edward Irving*, 148; Plato E. Shaw, *The Catholic Apostolic Church, Sometimes Called Irvingite* (New York: King's Crown, 1946), 52.

²⁴⁸ Davenport, *Albury Apostles*, 15; Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 364.

²⁴⁹ John M. Court, *Approaching the Apocalypse: A Short History of Christian Millenarianism* (London: I B Tauris, 2008)112.

²⁵⁰ Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 366, 368. While Margaret Oliphant described Irving as having many difficulties in the new ecclesiastical system after his re-ordination as 'angel', a Catholic Apostolic writer, William W. Andrews, insisted that some change was 'inevitable' in Irving's authority under the new order where the Holy Spirit had revived 'the ancient gifts and ministries'. In his *Gathered Under Apostles*, Columba Graham Flegg has also argued that Oliphant exaggerated Irving's difficulties between his deposition and re-ordination, and claimed that Irving was not a 'victim' of the new order. However, the fact that Irving departed for Glasgow to do 'the Lord's work' in spite of the church's instructions to the contrary suggests his latent dissatisfaction with the new order. His pastoral letter from Glasgow confirms it. See the next section, D.4. 'Final Journey'.

²⁵¹ Rowland Davenport, *Albury Apostles*, 91.

²⁵² Norton, *Memories of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow*, 201.

²⁵³ T. Carlyle, 'A letter from Thomas Carlyle to William Graham, 14 September 1834', in C.R. Sanders, ed., *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. VII, 297.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

In 1834 Irving's health deteriorated. Early in the year Irving was sent on a mission to Edinburgh, in connection with Mr. Tait's ministry, and he preached in a small chapel in Carrubber's Close to an audience of twenty. According to George Gilfillan, who had attended the sermon, Irving's appearance was 'ghastly' and 'his hair was as white as snow; the bones on his thin, pale cheek seemed, in the language of the Psalmist, to be "looking and staring" through his skin ... his squint, of which I had heard so much, was aggravated by the same cause; and his two eyes seemed darting a wild, hungry fire in two opposite directions towards the ends of the earth'.²⁵⁵ In May Thomas Carlyle happened to meet Irving in Kensington Gardens and was surprised to find that his friend had become 'an old man' in the two years and two months since he had last seen him. Irving admitted his weakness, but treated it as only temporary. According to Carlyle, 'his head, which I had left raven-black, was grown grey, on the temples almost snow-white; the face was hollow, wrinkly, collapsed; the figure, still perfectly erect, seemed to have lost its elasticity and strength ... his tone was not despondent; but it was low, pensive, full of silent sorrow. Once, perhaps twice I got a small bit of Annandale laugh from him'.²⁵⁶ Irving, Carlyle believed, was 'wearing himself down ... by spiritual agitations, which would kill him'.²⁵⁷ Carlyle was concerned over Irving being under the control of the leaders of the new flock because even a friend's sick visit was disturbed by them.²⁵⁸

Just one or two days before Irving's departure to Glasgow, he paid a farewell visit to the Carlyles. Carlyle never forgot Irving's 'fine chivalrous demeanour' to Jane, when Irving gazed around Jane's room and said to her with a smile in a 'suppressed sadness' that 'you are like an Eve, and make a little Paradise wherever you are!'.²⁵⁹ Carlyle held Irving's bridle

²⁵⁵ George Gilfillan, *The History of a Man* (London: Arthur Hall, 1856), 186f.

²⁵⁶ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 302f.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 304.

²⁵⁸ T. Carlyle, 'A letter from Thomas Carlyle to William Graham, 5 August 1834 & 14 September 1834 and a letter from Thomas Carlyle to John Carlyle, 15 August 1834', in C.R. Sanders, ed., *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. VII, 255, 269, 297f.

²⁵⁹ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 305; Hanson, *Necessary Evil*, 193.

while he mounted, and Irving's horse quietly walked up Cheyne Row, which was Carlyle's final view of his Annandale friend.

D.4. Final Journey

Against his doctor's advice that he should spend the winter in a milder climate and the church's instructions that he must rest, Irving started on his last journey north in September 1834 for 'the Lord's work' of organizing a church in Scotland. He was convinced that he had a mission in his homeland.²⁶⁰

He did not take a direct route, but instead travelled via Aberystwyth in Wales, and along the sea-side road to Harlech, Bangor, and Liverpool. Experiencing inclement weather and increasing weakness, Irving also suffered high fever with headaches. He tried to shake the symptoms off by cold showers, and refused to stay in bed. His conviction that bodily disease was the direct infliction of Satan made him look to faith and prayer for his physical recovery.²⁶¹ In 'boisterous and stormy' weather, Isabella Irving joined her husband in Liverpool. With his rapidly deteriorating health, Irving chose to travel for the remainder of the journey by ship. Mrs. Stewart Ker encountered the Irvings when they arrived in Greenock in mid October, and described Irving as 'sinking under a deep consumption. His gigantic frame bears all the marks of age and weakness; his tremendous voice is now faltering ... his bodily powers are exhausted'.²⁶²

In Glasgow he managed some preaching, but could not do his intended 'Lord's work'. He gradually sank. From his sickbed, Irving sent pastoral letters to his London flock, in which he revealed strong resentment against the order of the newly born denomination. He worried that the angel or apostle might be 'exalted into the place of Christ', and reproached

²⁶⁰ Davenport, *Albury Apostles*, 90; Andrews, *Edward Irving*, 153.

²⁶¹ Story, *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story*, 195.

²⁶² Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 398.

both himself and his congregation: 'I do repent, and call upon the whole flock to repent with me',²⁶³

McLeod Campbell, now the pastor of an independent church in Glasgow, visited Irving before his death. Robert Story also met him, and Irving stubbornly pleaded with Story to 'enter into the Ark of Safety'. Irving confided to Mrs. Stewart Ker his hope that Story would embrace his beliefs: 'I seldom bow my knee in prayer, but I pray to God that Story may be brought to see the truth as I see it'.²⁶⁴

On Sunday, 7 December, Irving was murmuring sonorous syllables, which his father-in-law determined were the first three verses of Psalm twenty-three in Hebrew, and the two men repeated them together.²⁶⁵ A few hours later Irving said to his wife, 'If I live, I live, unto the Lord; if I die, I die to the Lord; living or dying, I am the Lord's',²⁶⁶ and asked to have read to him Psalm eighteen and the fourth and fifth chapters of 1 Thessalonians. 'Peace be with you' were allegedly his last words to his wife, and he died shortly before midnight.

E. Conclusion

Irving was in the centre of the strong blast of early nineteenth century pre-millennialism. But he was rather clumsy in handling both pre-millennialism and the alleged spiritual gifts. The influence of Romanticism helps to explain the zeal for the Second Advent in the 1820s. While Irving claimed that he acquired his millennialism through the study of Scriptures,²⁶⁷ 'the romantic worldview of the day was highly compatible with apocalyptic sensibilities'.²⁶⁸ His despair over the state of the world and his striving for a transcendent spiritual ideal helped motivate his pursuit of the millennium. On the other hand, his earlier attention to the

²⁶³ Irving's pastoral letters written from Glasgow, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 422, 424.

²⁶⁴ Story, *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story*, 229.

²⁶⁵ Jones, *Edward Irving*, 376; Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 403; Andrews, *Edward Irving*, 157.

²⁶⁶ Wilks, *Edward Irving*, 261.

²⁶⁷ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 15.

²⁶⁸ Patterson, 'Designing the Last Days', 34.

kingdom of God also suggests that his chiliastic visions had been developed with a particular connection to his Christology. For Irving, knowledge of the Second Advent and related mysteries of grace were 'God's special gifts unto us as a church'.²⁶⁹ Unlike most of those involved in the prophetic movement, who proclaimed God's wrath in the last days, Irving's prophetic message emphasised love and friendship, depicting Christ as Brother or Friend, and he expected a sort of *homoousion* identity to emerge, so that when Christ returned, common believers would be like Him.²⁷⁰

Irving's zeal for prophetic study brought him to learn Spanish in order to translate the work of Manuel De Lacunza. Through exploring Lacunza's work, Irving defined his millennial system. His connection with Henry Drummond was developed because they shared many views, including pre-millennial visions of 'the cosmic battle upon earth'.²⁷¹ However, while the two men shared much in common, there were also key differences; Irving's Presbyterianism directed him to seek to restore primitive faith and order, and to forge the godly commonwealth of the sealed nation in anticipation of Christ's return, while Drummond's severe rejection of the world drove him and much of the Albury Circle into sectarianism and transformed his flock into a new denomination. Irving, as we have seen, had difficulty in adapting himself to the new order.

Irving's pre-millennialist thought can be understood as based on his Christology. The return of Christ was, for Irving, the last stage of His salvific mission in human history. As Christ's earthly ministry was His work in flesh, His glorified body after resurrection would establish cohesive relation between Him and the believers. For Irving, the crucifixion of Christ's flesh was the crucifixion of all humanity's flesh, by which their sinful nature was put to death.²⁷² Likewise 'the resurrection of his flesh was the resurrection of our flesh'.²⁷³ Irving's understanding of the sacraments enhanced his idea of Christ's brotherly intimacy

²⁶⁹ Irving, *The Last Days*, xii.

²⁷⁰ Irving, *John the Baptist* in *CW*, II, 104.

²⁷¹ Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, 113.

²⁷² *PW*, II, 558.

²⁷³ Irving, 'On the True Humanity of Christ', *MW*, I (1829), 425.

with believers; through the Lord's Supper, Irving saw the common believer's mystical union with Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. This mystical union would become palpable with Christ's return.

In Irving's thought, the work of Christ was for all fallen manhood, not only for the elect.²⁷⁴ When Christ took on sinful flesh, He also took the flesh 'out of the hands of all His and our enemies' and presented it to God pure and spotless.²⁷⁵ In this world, both Christ and His believers could do miraculous works by the power of the Holy Spirit. Union with God was, for Irving, possible only through the flesh of Christ.²⁷⁶ Irving further maintained that the mystical union with Christ would be developed into an ontological union at the Second Advent. The action of the seals (Rev. 6) was, in his interpretation, 'the act of putting Christ and His saints into possession of the inheritance which He purchased with His blood'.²⁷⁷ The Church, the congregation of believers, was, for Irving, 'His Bride' and Christ would return to the world as the Bridegroom. Irving's evaluation of the importance of suffering came upon his own suffering from an apocalyptic standpoint. His deposition from his venerated Presbyterian Church deprived him of his identity.

As Irving believed that 'no man knows the day of our Lord's coming',²⁷⁸ his message emphasised Christ's imminent return so that believers would live as if Christ might return at any moment.²⁷⁹ The event of Second Advent itself was a certainty, but when Christ would come was, for Irving, in 'the entire uncertainty'; indeed, this was 'God's own device for keeping His Church in a continual state of expectation'.²⁸⁰ At the same time he encouraged believers to look for a glorious victory through their suffering. Common believers were to open themselves to 'His quickening Spirit by which the decayed face of the earth would be

²⁷⁴ *PW*, I, 118.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 349.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 398. Irving argued that but the real union laid in believer's receiving the Spirit, when he explored the idea of 'union through flesh' in the sacramental context.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 602.

²⁷⁸ Irving, *The Church and State Responsible to Christ, And to One Another*, 36.

²⁷⁹ Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 168; Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, 104.

²⁸⁰ *PW*, I, 41.

renewed again'.²⁸¹ He further urged believers to have the eagle's eye, which alone, it had been said, could look upon the dazzling sun without being blinded. By receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost, Irving maintained, ordinary believers could have the eagle's eye, which would enable them to 'soar aloft into the heavenly glory' when Christ will come again.²⁸²

²⁸¹ Irving's pastoral letters written from Glasgow, in Oliphant, *Life of Irving*, II, 425.

²⁸² Irving, 'Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse', *MW*, V (1832), 317.

Conclusion

As a Scot, Irving held a conception of the unity of Church and State rooted in the Scottish Reformation and the Covenants, along with a patriotic devotion to his native land. His birthplace Annan had ‘been immortalized by the struggles and sufferings of the Covenanters’.¹ He was also influenced by the practices of the ancient Church and had a firm belief on the sole headship of Christ in Church. Believing that ‘the Christian Religion is the basis on which all our institutions rest’², Irving also held that the Church should play a leading role in society, a notion that was encouraged by his experience as assistant minister in Chalmers’s St John’s experiment in Glasgow between 1819 and 1822. In his ministry in London Irving also tried to improve social and religious conditions through the church. Although he grew to feel alienated ‘in the land of the stranger [London]’, Irving continued to long for a more Christian society.³

Educated within the traditions of the Scottish Enlightenment, Irving had embraced a broad set of intellectual principles and a veneration of learning, and he was proud of the role played by ministers of the Church of Scotland in the achievements of the Enlightenment. Irving’s three years as Chalmers’s assistant in Glasgow gave him insight into the realities of urban poverty and sympathy for those whose poverty deprived them of ‘their religion, their domestic comfort, their pride of independence, [and] their every thing’.⁴ His early reading reflected not only the thought of the Enlightenment but also the growing influence of Romanticism. The literature of Romanticism contributed to Irving’s interest in the nature of religious inspiration and the work of the Holy Spirit, and it helped to shape his ornate and grandiloquent literary style, with its archaic expressions. Irving came under further Romantic influences through his friendships, especially with Thomas Carlyle and Samuel

¹ Williams Landels, *Edward Irving* (London: Young Men’s Christian Association, 1864), 9.

² Irving, *A letter to the King*, 24.

³ *PW*, I, 47, Irving, ‘The Spiritual and National Benefits Resulting from the Erection of a New Church’, in *Thirty Sermons*, 121.

⁴ Edward Irving to Thomas Carlyle, 15 April 1820, NLS.MS.1764.175.

Taylor Coleridge. However, Irving did not merely blindly follow the ideas of others, but adopted them in his own thought. In case of Coleridge, Irving seems to have acquired a number of key ideas from the Sage of Highgate – for example, Coleridge’s ideas of the Logos, the Trinity, sacraments, Christian dispensation, and his exalted ecclesiology all contributed to Irving’s thought.⁵ But in many cases Coleridge was highly critical of Irving’s views, from which we can deduce that Irving took Coleridge’s ideas and reshaped them into his own distinctive system. The mood of early nineteenth-century Romanticism also helped to shape Irving’s mind and personality, and his pre-millennialism in particular was infused with elements of Romantic thought and feeling.

As he began serious theological publication in London after 1822, Irving tended to engage with several themes at the same time, which suggests that his basic theological ideas had been settled in his mind before his London ministry, and possibly as early as his time at the University of Edinburgh. For example, his first major publication, *The Oracles of God and the Judgement to Come*, published in 1823, was the product of what he claimed to be ‘more than ten years’ meditation, and it contains his apocalyptic vision, while his discourse on John the Baptist, which also appeared in 1823, contains his description of ‘Christ’s sinful flesh’. His first eschatological work, *Babylon and Infidelity*, was published in 1826, and his work on the incarnation, which occupied him for about three years, was published in 1828. This record of publication does not suggest that one idea was the direct source of the others in an orderly, chronological development. However, as this thesis has argued, it does appear that a central idea underlying Irving’s whole theological framework was that of Christ’s genuine humanity, or what he termed Christ’s sinful flesh.

Thus, in order to understand Irving’s theology, a good starting point is his Christology. Irving’s desire to draw near to God led him to emphasise the humiliated Christ with his corruptible body—a ‘sinful flesh’ that was the same as Irving’s own. It was, Irving believed,

⁵ *PW*, I, 230; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 80; Graham McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, 57; Lee, ‘The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving’, 26; Elliot, ‘Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis’ 316.

only through Christ's human nature that the Godhead was made known to humanity and through which man and God could be reconciled.⁶ It was, for him, the most 'catholic and orthodox doctrine' that Christ had taken human nature in its fallen state, which meant in the Romantic language of his times, 'bringing Christ into focus as both a human and a God'.⁷ Within his Trinitarian understanding Irving found the Spirit's most dynamic work to be in connection with Christ and by which Christ remained sinless even though his body was liable to sin. By the power of the Spirit, Irving claimed, Christ was kept free from sin through perfect faith, and therefore could offer himself as the spotless Lamb. This doctrine became the foundation of Irving's entire theological system. Irving's idea of Christ's possessing the same humanity as believers was expressed through such words as 'sinful', 'corruptible', 'natural mortal', 'fallen', and 'all-labile to sin'. In spite of this 'all-liability to sin', however, Christ did not sin because of the work of the Spirit throughout his earthly life, from his incarnation to his glorification. Irving's contentious language led to much theological conflict, and ultimately to his deposition from the established Church of Scotland, which at that time officially affirmed Christ's sinlessness and 'inherently spotless humanity'.

Irving's understanding of the sacraments was another key element in his theological framework, and was related to his Christology. The Spirit's work upon Christ's human nature was extended to believers through Baptism, while by attending the Lord's Supper believers could receive the Holy Spirit and taste the coming Kingdom. The Lord's Supper also led the attendants to unite with Christ; it fed them with Christ's flesh and they became one with him, which ultimately would lead them to recover God's image.⁸ The work of the Spirit was central to Irving's understanding of both Christology and the sacraments.

Irving's friends, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, John McLeod Campbell, and Alexander J. Scott, all had a profound effect on Irving's thinking. Although Irving agreed with their

⁶ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 3.

⁷ Meldrum, *Conscience and Compromise*, 134.

⁸ E. Irving, 'Sermons in Manuscripts' (London: 1833), 30f. [MS General 791 at Glasgow University Library]

view of universal atonement based on God's unlimited love, Irving's own understanding of universal atonement had another basis: Christ's sinful flesh. Irving's conception of the person of Christ contained within it the idea of God's unlimited love for humanity.

In time, Erskine and McLeod Campbell came to agree with Irving's view of Christ's sinful flesh, while Scott also came to emphasise Christ's genuine humanity.⁹ They came to believe that only by sharing the sinful human nature could Christ truly atone for believers' sins, and thus could universal redemption be accomplished. For McLeod Campbell, who came to believe that Christ took 'our nature just as we have it', the doctrine of the person of Christ became the foundation for all his later theological ideas.¹⁰ Just as Erskine, McLeod Campbell and Scott broadly agreed with Irving's Christology, so they also came to share Irving's related theological conceptions. Their interest in the spiritual gifts can be understood in this context. However, they ultimately refrained from embracing Irving's extreme position on the endowment of miraculous gifts and his pre-millennialism.

Although he received some support from Erskine, McLeod Campbell and Scott, most of Irving's evangelical contemporaries could not accept his views of the person of Christ, which they perceived as deviating from Calvinist orthodoxy and threatening to confuse simple believers. They came to view him as a threat to the growing evangelical movement in early nineteenth-century Britain. For Irving, on the other hand, his opponents' emphasis on Christ's 'spotless humanity' and the doctrine of limited atonement in the Westminster Confession of Faith failed to recognise God's unlimited love for all humanity and perpetuated a legalistic and forbidding view of religion.

While the miraculous manifestations of the spiritual gifts and pre-millennialism were prominent themes in Irving's theology, his understanding of Christ's genuine humanity and the dynamic work of the Spirit formed the core of his theology, which showed a remarkable

⁹ J. McLeod Campbell, *Sermons, Taken in Short Hand* (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1831-2), 2.23.109; T. Erskine, 'Extract from a Letter, Jan. 15, 1830', in *Letters*, I, 287; Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 43, 77.

¹⁰ McLeod Campbell, *Sermons, Taken in Short Hand* (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1831, 32), 1.18.437.

connectivity to his other ideas. In Irving's conception, man was destined to manifest God's glory, by the will of the Godhead.¹¹ The common ground between Christ and believers was, for Irving, the sharing of sinful flesh. In his understanding of the spiritual gifts, all humanity had the potential to do the same things that Christ did. He believed that just as Christ had come into this world 'to do the Father's will in our condition', so believers 'might be assured of power and ability through Him to do the same'.¹² Irving's idea of the spiritual gifts also contributed to his Christian ethics; he believed that 'a partaker of the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost can not go back away', and that thus there would be a continual manifestation of the spiritual gifts in the individual's moral and spiritual life.¹³

Irving is generally remembered as a central figure in the movement of early nineteenth-century pre-millennialism. However, his pre-millennialism must be understood in terms of his views on the person of Christ, as well as in the context of his personal tragedies; his pre-millennialism was also strongly supported by the general ethos of Romanticism. For some early nineteenth-century Evangelicals, including Irving, their Evangelicalism shifted from a movement strongly influenced by Enlightenment optimism to one influenced by what the Church historian David Hempton has recently described as Romantic pessimism, with emphasis on the limits of human nature in its striving towards perfection, and on the limits of progress towards the Christian commonwealth in this world; some Evangelicals became convinced that divine action alone could rescue a deteriorating human condition, and they began looking to the imminence of a divinely instituted millennial kingdom.¹⁴ As Romanticism has a process of 'struggle and dynamic movement towards transcendent goals', Irving's apocalyptic vision contains elements of a Romantic

¹¹ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic*, 45; Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh*, 116.

¹² Irving, *The Church, with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power*, in *CW*, V, 498.

¹³ Henry Drummond to Thomas Chalmers, 22 May 1832, New College Library, TCP, CHA 4.178.21.

¹⁴ David Hempton, *Evangelical Disenchantment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 30.

epic – ‘the quest to faithfully complete the church’s earthly mission culminating in the triumph of the Second Coming and the millennial kingdom’.¹⁵

The idea of Christ’s coming in flesh fore-shadowed Irving’s later focus on apocalyptic visions of Christ’s return in glory. Christ, who came into this world with the same humanity as his creatures and humbled himself to the point of death, would soon return in glory and power, according to Irving, to judge those who had not accepted his gospel offer of salvation. Irving’s emphasis on God’s wrath was prevalent from the early stages of his London ministry, and when this idea was mixed with his distinctive Christology, it led to a longing expectation of Christ’s return, with his sinful flesh changed into a glorious body.¹⁶ The present national apostasy, which had brought the ‘wreck of Christian nation and the consumption of Christian churches’, Irving declared, should be remedied by ‘nothing but measures of repentance and reformation’.¹⁷ He called for continual repentance in order to restore Britain to its sealed state as a covenanted nation.

While translating the Jesuit Lacunza’s work, Irving developed his views on Christ’s personal return by synthesizing Lacunza’s ideas with his own understanding of Christology and the sacraments. It led to a vision, for Irving, not only of believers meeting the returning Saviour but also of their sinful flesh being changed into a glorious body—and this in turn making it possible for the church to become ‘the everlasting spouse of Christ in the heavenly place’.¹⁸ The universal church gathering together in worship of God’s glory was, for Irving, the body of Jesus, ‘the nearest to the throne’.¹⁹

Irving’s understanding of the sacraments nourished his Christological-millennial view. According to Irving’s mystical interpretation, believers could have a foretaste of their oneness with Christ in the sacraments, through which their ‘citizenship in the heaven’ has

¹⁵ Peter Elliot, ‘Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis’, 242, 263.

¹⁶ *PW*, I, 482.

¹⁷ E. Irving, *An Apology for the Ancient Fulness and Purity of the Doctrine of the Kirk of Scotland* (London: James Nisbet, 1828), 6.

¹⁸ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 189f.

¹⁹ Irving, *Sermons in Manuscripts* (London: 1833), 3 - 6.

been promised and indeed already achieved. The common believers received their legacy of holiness, beauty and glory from Christ by attending the Lord's Supper.²⁰ For Irving, 'the Baptism is the seal of a new life in Adam ... and the bread of the Supper is the seal of a holy flesh lost in Adam ... and the wine-cup is a seal of the lordship', in which Christ had recovered for all humanity.²¹ Irving understood that God's redemptive plan was not merely an amendment of the divine constitution of the world; rather, it was part of God's original purpose, set forth before the foundation of the world: 'Christ is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'.²² His flesh sustained the Father's glory, as well as the Father's burden; Christ had come in the flesh glorified the Father by emptying and humbling himself to the point of death. As a consequence, the Father took the Son and 'set him head over all creation, not only visible, but also invisible', at the right hand of God.²³ In this sense, partaking of Christ's flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper, Irving believed, would ultimately lead a believer to become 'an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ'.²⁴

The more traumatic episodes of Irving's life – for example, his unfruitful love affair with Jane Welsh, the loss of his children, and the tragic accident in the collapse of the Kirkcaldy Kirk – all drove his desire to see the Lord's presence in the flesh. The loss of his children affected his theology; it drove him to contemplate the 'glorious exchange' of his own children alongside the expectation of God's eternal Son.²⁵ Indeed, Irving's emphasis on the importance of suffering grew out of his own suffering. The common believer's suffering with Christ was for Irving an indispensable element of the Christian life. Indeed, Irving's struggle with his world was clearly reflected in his vivid depictions of Christ's agony through his sinful flesh. On the one hand, he accepted the disappointments of his life, while on the other hand he looked forward to the coming Kingdom. Irving's model of the

²⁰ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 516.

²¹ *PW*, II, 557.

²² E. Irving, 'The Jewish Dispensation', in *Five Lectures, Delivered by Mr. Irving in 1829, at the Rotunda, Dublin, Taken in Short-hand by Mr. Hanley* (London: John Bennett, 1835), 18.

²³ Irving, 'Jesus Our Ensample, that We should Follow His Steps', *MW*, VI (1832), 107.

²⁴ Irving, *Homilies on the Lord's Supper* in *CW*, II, 625; *PW*, II, 558.

²⁵ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the work of Ben Ezra*, 72.

Christian life was deduced from his teaching of Christ's sinful flesh and the tragedies of his own life. As Christ's body became perfect through suffering in his real humanity, so the cross of suffering for common believers was essential for their obtaining glory.

The Church of Scotland eventually came to view Irving and his associates as a threat to its doctrinal standards, and took action against them. Beginning in 1831, the General Assembly deposed a number of ministers for heresy. Irving was deposed from ministry of the Established Church of Scotland by the Presbytery of Annan in 1833; this stripped him of his Presbyterian identity and weakened his commitment to the union of Church and State.

Throughout his life, Irving's earnest desire was to achieve union with Christ on the basis of his understanding of Christ's genuine humanity. Sometimes Irving felt like John the Baptist, proclaiming God's imminent judgement upon an apostate world. His severe criticism of this world and the churches was intended to recall them to the struggle against 'errors'.²⁶ Irving's message was constantly about pursuing the grace of Christ, the Father's abundant love, and the continuous work of the Spirit. One early passage from Irving, which is believed to have been written in his early London ministry in 1823, reveals his intense desire for union with God.

He cometh as your Brother, seeking your love; He cometh as your Friend, seeking your friendship. He will introduce you to His Father, and His Father will dwell with you, and you will have the marvellous honour of being called the sons of God; and when He who is our life shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.²⁷

Irving cut a grand figure; he was very tall and striking in his physical appearance, and he had a warm and open personality. His mind was open to new ideas, while his pulpit eloquence attracted huge congregations in London. But at times 'Irving was caught in the whirl of his own strong emotions, and carried forward by their overpowering rush'.²⁸ Irving tended to see the world exclusively from his own point of view. For example, once he was

²⁶ *Trial of Irving in Annan*, 35.

²⁷ Irving, *John the Baptist* in *CW*, II, 104.

²⁸ Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century*, 156.

fully engaged with the idea of millennialism after publishing *Babylon and Infidelity*, he started to regard all incidents occurring around him as having an eschatological prospect.²⁹ Throughout his life he struggled to maintain a psychological balance between despair and his utopian dream in the coming kingdom. Irving's approach to God, according to his friends, Thomas Erskine and A. J. Scott after his death, reflected 'the simplicity of a child'.³⁰

Irving's Christological writings have been arguably influential on some twentieth-century theologians, including Karl Barth, T. F. Torrance, and Colin Gunton, and continue to provoke theological interest.³¹ Indeed, Irving's influence on later theologians would be a valuable subject for a future study. In addition to his Christology, as we have seen, Irving's understanding of the sacraments forms another major theme in his theology, and one which also needs future work.

As we have seen in this thesis, Irving's idea of Christ's genuine humanity was at the core of his theological beliefs. His views of the sacraments were also important at the different stages of his theological development, giving expression to his Christology and contributing to his eschatological ideas.

The cup in the Lord's Supper, for Irving, was Christ's pledge to His people as his joint-heirs, and 'the bread of the Supper is the seal of a holy flesh lost in Adam, and in Him recovered; the wine-cup is a seal of the lordship, the dominion lost in Adam, and in Him recovered'.³² Irving's 'metaphysical' understanding of the Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper was underpinned by his idea of the humanity of Christ: 'He is present, even Christ is

²⁹ PW, I, ix.

³⁰ T. Erskine to Miss Stuart, 13 Dec 1834, in Erskine, *Letters*, I, 232; Campbell, *Memorials of John McLeod Campbell*, I, 126.

³¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. I, Part 2, 154; T.F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 48ff; T.F. Torrance, 'The Place of Christology in Biblical and Dogmatic Theology', in *Essays in Christology for Karl Barth* (ed. T. H. L. Parker. London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 11-38; Colin Gunton, 'Two Dogmas Revisited: Edward Irving's Christology,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41 no 3 (1988): 359-376; Donald MacLeod, 'The doctrine of the incarnation in Scottish theology: Edward Irving,' *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 9 Spr (1991): 40-50; Leanne Van Dyk, review of Graham McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*. *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 no 2 N (1997): 510-511.

³² PW, II, 557.

presented, as a regenerator in baptism to every believer; and He is present as a nurse or feeder in the Lord's Supper, to every believer'³³

Christ became the common believer's High Priest, which office He obtained not through His divinity, but through His humanity.³⁴ As Christ's risen body provided believers with hope of resurrection, so the New Jerusalem provided them with hope of spiritual glory. The New Jerusalem was, in Irving's conception, the spiritual destination for common believers who received spiritual nourishment through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.³⁵ The promise of the sacraments would find fulfilment, according to Irving, through union with Christ as the Head of the Church, in the New Jerusalem.

³³ *PW*, I, 262; Lee, 'The Humanity of Christ and the Church in the Teaching of Edward Irving', 135f.

³⁴ *PW*, II, 101.

³⁵ *PW*, I, 66.

Appendix

Chronology of Edward Irving

4 Aug. 1792	Irving was born as the second son of Gavin and Mary Irving at Annan, Dumfriesshire. Educated under Peggy (Margaret) Paine, then, moved to Annan Academy where Adam Hope was his tutor. Irving often attended the Secession Congregation of the Rev John Johnston in Ecclefechan.
1805	Irving began study at the University of Edinburgh with his brother John.
April 1809	Graduated M.A. from the University of Edinburgh, and became a partial student in Divinity.
Spring 1810	Irving took up a teaching position at Mathematical School in Haddington.
1811	Irving gave private Latin tutoring to Jane Welsh, Dr. John Welsh's daughter, at John Leslie's recommendation. Irving took some children to Edinburgh to hear Thomas Chalmers' sermon; this was his first contact with Chalmers.
1812	Became the schoolmaster in the newly opened Kirkcaldy Academy, Fife. Irving became engaged to Isabella Martin, the daughter of Rev. Dr. John Martin
June 1815	Irving was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, the Church of Scotland.
Summer 1816	Thomas Carlyle became schoolmaster at another new school in Kirkcaldy.
Summer 1818	Irving left Kirkcaldy to return to Edinburgh to study. T. Carlyle also left Kirkcaldy in Nov 1818.
1819	Irving fell in love with Jane Welsh.
Aug 1819	Irving delivered a trial sermon before Thomas Chalmers at St George's, arranged by Dr Andrew Thomson.
Oct 1819	Irving started assistant ministry at St. John's, Glasgow under Thomas Chalmers.

May 1821	Irving introduced Jane Welsh to Thomas Carlyle.
Summer 1821	Irving received an invitation call from Kingston, Jamaica, but declined it.
24 Dec 1821	Irving delivered a trial sermon at Caledonian Church in London, before the Duke of York.
June 1822	Irving was ordained by Annan Presbytery to the ministry of the Church of Scotland.
8 July 1822	Irving set off from Glasgow to London.
12 July 1822	Irving began his ministry in London.
16 Oct 1822	Irving was formally inducted at Caledonian Chapel in Hatton Garden, London.
	Within 9 months the congregation had increased from fifty to a thousand, with a 600-seat capacity in the church.
Early 1823	Irving published his first book, <i>The Oracles of God and the Judgement to Come</i> .
	Irving delivered a discourse on the <i>John the Baptist</i> , in which he first used the phrase, 'Christ's sinful flesh'.
	Gave Lectures on the <i>Temptation</i> (Series of Gospel of Luke).
July 1823	Irving met S. T. Coleridge, introduced by Basil Montagu.
13 Oct 1823	Irving married to Isabella Martin at Kirkcaldy, and settled at the suburb of Pentonville, London.
Nov 1823	Irving attended Thomas Chalmers' farewell sermon at St John's, as Chalmers left to become professor of moral philosophy in St Andrews.
14 May 1824	Irving delivered a sermon before the London Missionary Society, in Whitefield's Tabernacle, which was published as <i>For Missionaries after the Apostolic School</i> in 1825, and dedicated to S. T. Coleridge.
July 1824	The foundation-stone was laid for Irving's magnificent neo-Gothic style church with 1800 seats in Regent Square, London.
22 July 1824	Irving's first child, Edward, was born.
Early 1825	Irving met Mr. Hatley Frere.
1825	Irving gave the anniversary sermon of the Continental Society, at the request of Henry Drummond. He published it under the title, <i>Babylon and Infidelity</i> , in 1826.

	He worked on <i>Introductory Essay to Bishop Horne's Commentary on the Book of Psalms</i> .
Summer 1825	Irving received a call to the ministry of St Cuthbert's church, Edinburgh, and he declined it.
July 1825	Irving delivered a series of sermons on the doctrine of the Trinity and the will of the Father in Christ's manifestation. Irving believed that by Baptism believers are engrafted in Christ Jesus.
2 Oct 1825	His daughter, Margaret, was born.
11 Oct 1825	Edward, Irving's first son, died of whooping cough in Kirkcaldy. Mrs Irving stayed in Kirkcaldy about two months with their infant daughter, and Irving carried on a large correspondence with his wife.
Christmas 1825	Irving started writing his discourses of prophecy.
1826	Irving contemplated ideas of Christ's headship of the Church, the Lord's presence in the sacrament as leading to union with Him, the Second Advent, and Baptism as leading to birth into immortality.
1826	Irving Published <i>Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed by God</i> , dedicated to Hatley Frere. Irving encountered the Spanish work of the Chilean Jesuit, Juan Josafat Ben Ezra, in early 1826 and learned Spanish in order to translate the work; he published it in January 1827.
Apr 1826	Irving delivered a sermon before the London Hibernian Society. After experiencing a health problem, Irving began reflecting on the healing power of the Holy Spirit.
Summer 1826	Irving spent summer at Beckenham. Worked on the Incarnation, which would be published in November 1828.
17 Oct 1826	Thomas Carlyle married Jane Welsh.
Advent 1826	Irving attended the first of a series of annual week-long conference on prophecy at Henry Drummond's Albury Park estate, Surrey; he would continue to do so until the last conference in July 1830.
27 Jan 1827	Irving published <i>The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty</i> with a long <i>Preface</i> .
15 Mar 1827	Irving presented the ordination charge of Hugh Baillie McLean.

Spring 1827	Irving's daughter, Mary, was born.
March 1827	Some of Irving's congregation noticed his use of the phrase 'sinful flesh' with reference to the nature of Jesus Christ.
11 May 1827	The National Scotch Church was opened in Regent Square, London, with Thomas Chalmers giving the opening address.
May 1827	T. Erskine read Irving's prophetic discourses in Rome.
10 July 1827	Irving preached at the Gospel Tract Society.
28 Oct 1827	Henry Cole visited the National Scotch Church to hear about Irving's idea of 'sinful' flesh of Christ, then, published a critical track (<i>Letter to the Rev. Edward Irving</i>) in December 1827.
Dec 1827	Mary, Irving's daughter, died.
1827	Irving preached a series of messages on Baptism and discussed the Spiritual gifts.
1827	Irving opposed the inclusion of the Apocrypha in bibles distributed by the British and Foreign Bible Society.
1827	John McLeod Campbell began to teach that Christ had died for all humankind.
1828	Irving published <i>An Apology for the Ancient Fulness and Purity of the Doctrine of the Kirk of Scotland</i> , based on his Fast-day sermon before the Presbytery of London.
May 1828	Irving preached a series of sermons on the apocalypse in Edinburgh during the meeting of the General Assembly. Irving met John McLeod Campbell of Row, discussed with him the idea of the universal atonement, and then travelled to McLeod Campbell's parish church in the Gareloch. Irving met Alexander J. Scott and urged Scott to become his assistant minister in London.
15 June 1828	The gallery of Kirkcaldy Church, where Irving was about to preach, collapsed under the weight of the crowd, resulting in thirty-five deaths.
July 1828	Irving published <i>The Last Days: A Discourse on the Evil Character of These our Times: Proving Them to be the 'Perilous Times' of the 'Last Days'</i> .
Sep 1828	A. J. Scott joined Irving's ministerial team in London as a home missionary.

1828	Irving published <i>Homilies on Baptism</i> , which he had begun preparing in 1825. Irving's intention to publish <i>Homilies on the Lord's Supper</i> was not carried out, until his nephew the Rev. G. Carlyle edited it for publication in the <i>CW</i> .
Nov 1828	Irving published <i>Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses</i> . Irving published <i>Parable of the Sower</i> .
Mar 1829	The Albury Circle issued the first volume of the <i>Morning Watch</i> .
May 1829	Irving delivered a second set of sermons on the apocalypse in Edinburgh, and conducted a preaching tour in Scotland (Dumfries, Holywood, Nith, Dunscore, Craigenputtock, Glasgow, Paisley, Rosneath, Row, Edinburgh, Kirkcaldy) and attracted crowds estimated at up to thirteen thousand.
1829	Irving published <i>Church and State Responsible to Christ</i> .
Jan 1830	Irving published <i>The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature. Set Forth in Four Parts</i> .
Mar 1830	Mary Campbell allegedly spoke in an unknown language (tongues) in Garloch.
Apr 1830	Margaret MacDonald in Port Glasgow and Mary Campbell were allegedly healed miraculously.
May 1830	Irving published <i>The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord's Human Nature</i> , and <i>The Doctrine Held by the Church of Scotland</i> .
May 1830	Trial of Rev. H. B. McLean, for his claim of Christ's peccability, before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.
July 6 1830	Irving's son, Samuel, died after a long sickness.
Sep 1830	Irving had an autumn holiday in Ireland with his family.
Sep 1830	Irving published <i>The Church, with Her Endowment</i> in the <i>Morning Watch</i> .
Oct 1830	Thomas Chalmers visited Irving and became concerned over Irving's ideas.
19 Oct 1830	Irving withdrew himself from the authority of the London Presbytery.
Nov 30 1830	London Presbytery ruled that Irving was guilty of heresy for his ideas concerning Christ's sinful flesh.
15 Dec 1830	The elders and deacons of the National Scotch Church, Regent Square, released a public statement of support for Irving and his doctrine.

1831	Irving published <i>Christ's Holiness in Flesh</i> .
21 Feb 1831	Irving's son, Martin Howy, was born; he later became a professor at Melbourne University.
22 April 1831	Irving began work on <i>the Prophetical Works</i> , which were later edited and published by his nephew the Rev. Gavin Carlyle in 1867.
30 April 1831	Mrs Cardale (John Cardale's wife) stood up during a prayer meeting and spoke in tongues and prophesied.
May 1831	Regent Square congregation held early morning prayer meetings for the forthcoming General Assembly, and then began praying for the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Church.
May 1831	The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland deposed some of Irving's associates (John McLeod Campbell, Hugh Baillie McLean, Sandy Scott), and began proceedings against Irving's teachings on Christ's sinful substance.
July 1831	Irving mentioned that tongues and prophecy had occurred at National Scotch Church, in his letter to his university friend, Robert Story.
August 1831	Many spoke in tongues, including Mrs. J. Cardale, Miss Emily Cardale, Miss Hall, and Mr. Taplin.
16 or 30 Oct 1831	Miss Hall broke out tongues in the morning service, and Mr. Taplin in the evening service. Soon Irving authorized the gifts to be exercised in the prayer meeting and church service.
21 Oct 1831	At Session meeting, the elders complained against Irving's authorization of the alleged spiritual gifts at the early morning church services.
Nov 1831	Irving published <i>The Day of Pentecost</i> .
14 Jan 1832	Robert Baxter spoke in tongues.
26 Apr 1832	After the board of trustees of the National Scotch Church had brought the issue of speaking tongues during the service before the London Presbytery on 22 March, the trial now started, and Robert Baxter spoke to Irving that he had been deluded in the matter of the 'gifts'.
2 May 1832	The London Presbytery decided that Irving was in violation of the Church of Scotland order of worship.
4 May 1832	Irving was ejected from his pastorate at the National Scotch Church, London.

6 May 1832	Irving and 800 followers worshipped in a rented facility in the Bazaar in Gray's Inn Road, and afterwards settled in rooms on Newman Street, London.
13 Oct 1832	Irving replied to a letter from the Presbytery of Annan enquiring about whether he was the author of three tracts.
19 or 24 Oct 1832	Irving's church had a formal opening service in their place of worship at Newman Street.
7 Nov 1832	John B. Cardale was appointed as the first 'Apostle' in the new body, later to be called the Catholic Apostolic Church.
1832	Irving's father died at the age of seventy-four.
Early 1833	Sandy Scott refused to give his sanction to the utterances in tongues at Newman Street. McLeod Campbell was also unable to perceive any evidence of Divine inspiration of it. In 1834 Thomas Erskine's belief in the whole matter of gifts was shaken.
13 Mar 1833	The Presbytery of Annan deposed Irving from the ministry of the Church of Scotland for his views on Christ's sinful flesh, in a trial before two-thousand spectators.
31 Mar 1833	Irving was blocked by an 'Apostle' when Irving sought to baptize a child.
5 Apr 1833	Irving was re-ordained as an 'Angel' or chief pastor of the flock assembled in Newman Street, by Mr J. B. Cardale.
23 Apr 1833	Irving's youngest son, Ebenezer, died in infancy.
June 1833	The <i>Morning Watch</i> published its final volume.
Jan 1834	Irving made a short trip to Scotland to give support to Mr. Tait's ministry.
Summer 1834	Irving was showing tuberculosis-like symptoms. T. Carlyle met Irving at Kensington Garden and was disturbed by the latter's physical deterioration.
Sept 1834	Irving began his final journey to Glasgow via Wales, and his wife joined him during the trip in Liverpool.
Oct-mid 1834	Irving, with his wife, arrived at Greenock, encountered by Mrs. Stewart Ker, and they settled in Glasgow.
7 Dec 1834	Irving died near midnight, attended by his wife, his mother, his father-in-law (Dr Martin), and his sister (Mrs Dickson). He was buried in the crypt of Glasgow Cathedral.

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